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MODERN(IZING) BURIAL IN INTERWAR AMERICAN LITERATURE

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English at
The University of Mississippi

By

Victoria M. Bryan

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to study literary representations of interwar American deathways as reflections of modernity. The study of burial in United States history tends to focus on mid- to late-nineteenth century movements that distance the dead from the living. This dissertation argues that these practices left Americans ill-equipped to process the influx of death from the conflict areas of World War I, keen to allow the further development of the funeral industry during the interwar period, and anxious about the certain rise in death tolls that would result from World War II. Interwar literature, therefore, exhibits a difficulty in meaning-making that extends to the increased death toll and the modernization of deathways between the world wars. Novels examined include John Dos Passos's *1919* and *One Man's Initiation: 1917*; William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary*; Willa Cather's *One of Ours*; Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*; and Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those who helped—directly or indirectly—in its completion, including my dissertation committee, my family, my friends, and my husband, Robert Marshall.

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Introduction:

Living With(out) Our Dead

“[B]oth the institutional normalization of death and its questioning result from broader cultural changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: The rise of nationalism, scientific and technological innovation, secularization and religious pluralism, the development of psychoanalysis and anthropology, and multiculturalism and contribute to a crisis in mourning. In short, by the end of the First World War, death was something that Western culture could no longer interpret adequately.”

--Laura Wittman, *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body*

Robert Frost’s “Home Burial”—a poem concerned with the grief of a husband and wife over losing and having to bury their first child—contains a pressing question in the face of incomprehensible death. The husband faces the burden of burying the child after it has passed, and immediately afterwards, comes inside with “the stains on [his] shoes/ Of the fresh earth from [his] own baby’s grave” (84-5) and says, “Three foggy mornings and one rainy day/ Will rot the best birch fence a man can build” (92-3). Some time later, the wife recounts this conversation to her husband, explaining that she was horrified by his apparent nonchalance, saying, “Think of it, talk like that at such a time!/ What had how long it takes a birch to rot/ To do with what was in the darkened parlor?” (94-6). The wife poses the question out of anger and grief, and the husband, though he has reacted differently to his child’s death, responds with comparable emotions. Both are grieving and both feel the weight of the loss of their child. The tension between the couple, however, results from the fact that the husband represents a very different kind of relationship with burial—a holdover from a time before the rise of the American burial

industry during which families performed home burials often and without guilt over not engaging in elaborate funerary purchases—than does the wife, who finds home burial crass and unceremonious. In the end, the husband does not answer her question. What does the rotting of a birch fence have to do with what was in the darkened parlor (the site of the child’s memorial service)? The answer requires complex consideration and a layered understanding of American deathways during U.S. modernization.

Deathways—a broad term that includes burial, crematory practices, funerals of differing sorts, forms of mourning, commemorative customs, ways of handling corpses, ceremonies surrounding death, etc.—are essential. Every person will die eventually, and no human culture allows for ignoring that fact. Whether we bury, cryogenically freeze, ceremonially ingest, mummify, embalm, cremate, or simply burn a body; whether we memorialize a body, an absent body, or a legacy, or succeed in memorialization despite our best efforts to the contrary; whether we choose to focus on the happy or sad times, the healthy or unhealthy times, the good or evil done during a lifetime, the sorrows or exultant triumphs of a life drawn to a close, the living must encounter the dead.

These encounters drive the living to ascribe meaning to death. Such is the case with the wife in Frost’s poem. She wants to see her child’s death have meaning. She is outraged at her husband’s flippant conversation after digging his child’s grave, and says, “You *couldn’t* care” (101; emphasis in original), accusing her husband of ascribing too little meaning to their child’s death by performing the burial himself. She equates meaning with a funeral more substantial and more ceremonious than the home burial her husband provided and desires more time for the grieving process to take place. However, the narrative takes an interesting twist: the husband, who poses several variations of the question “Can’t a man speak of his own child he’s lost?”

(35), wants to ascribe meaning to his child's death, as well. He wants to remember; he wants to give voice to his grief. Just as with this couple, humankind strives to understand death in varied and diverse ways. We write eulogies that glorify, order headstones with commemorative engravings, listen to sermons at the graveside or funeral location, utter long speeches or confessions during a grave visit or at a deathbed, perform ritual recitations, and carry out myriad other forms of voiced or written remembrance in the wake of the death of a loved one. In hopes of making meaning out of death, human cultures surround deathways with language because of language's fundamental role in creating meaning, solidifying memory, and assigning definition to things inherently abject or uncomfortable.¹ Though these meaning-making endeavors tend to take generations to solidify and develop organically, they are not formed absent-mindedly or carelessly. They emerge from intention and instinct, from necessity and indulgence and conspicuous consumption, and Frost's poem outlines the fragility of these traditional rituals when continue into a modernized world.

Likewise, literature has often been used to memorialize the dead. Elegies, odes, dirges, and epitaphs serve as memorializing forms of writing. It stands to reason, then, that for centuries poetry has offered a means to achieve everlasting life, or so the myth goes. Take, for example, Horace's Ode 3.30, which begins "I have built a monument more durable than bronze,/ loftier than the regal pile of pyramids,/ that cannot be destroyed either by/ corroding rains or the tempestuous North wind/ or the endless passage of the years/ or the flight of centuries (1-6). The

¹ Valerie Connors writes that "our ability to remember is often categorized into two different memory types: The memory of how to do specific things...and personal and factual information memories....These types of memory are both shown to be related to language." Full journals are dedicated to the importance of language to memory and memory formation (*The Journal of Memory and Language* is one such example), and studies are often conducted on the overlaps between language and memory in various locations in the brain (see Buckner, et al. and Schank).

self-referential ode likens itself to massive burial structures and bronze monuments built to important figures who have long since died to suggest that the power of the written word will not simply memorialize the departed but will symbolically keep him from fully passing from the earth by keeping an important part of him alive. The author may pass away, but “[n]ot all of me/ shall die” (6-7), and though his body may be buried, “a great part of me shall escape/ Libitina, Goddess of Death” (7-8). The “great part” of this author’s self may be the soul or the memory of the author or the legacy of his work, but the author sees this literary sort of memorial as more appropriate and more powerful than architectural forms of memorialization. Another obvious example is Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 (“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”),² which closes with the famous couplet that reads “So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee” (13-14). Like Horace’s Ode, Shakespeare insists that his sonnet—as long as it is preserved—will not only memorialize his loved one, but will actually “give life” to her. In other words, the language he uses to describe her will *embody* her memory long after her physical body is gone.

That generations of writers have been centrally concerned with death is no secret. As the examples above suggest, writers have understood the reality of death and the need to either defy it or memorialize a loss in its wake for centuries. Frost’s “Home Burial” represents this conflict by juxtaposing two very different stances on *how* to commemorate the dead, which reflects a modern breakdown of consensus about the appropriateness of certain deathways. The conflict extends beyond the child’s death. The wife is bothered by the husband’s relationship with burial for more reasons than simply how he chose to bury their child. The poem opens with her walking

² This particular sonnet is often anthologized under the *exegi monumentum* theme, a literary tradition stemming from Horace’s ode in question.

down the stairs in their home “looking back over her shoulder at some fear” (3) that she can see through a window. The window looks out over the scene of “the little graveyard where [the husband’s] people are” (23), and the wife regards it fearfully. The graveyard contains “three stones of slate and one of marble,/ broad-shouldered little slabs” (26-7), but the husband says, “We haven’t to mind *those*./ But I understand: it is not the stones,/ But the child’s mound” (28-30). The graveyard does not bother the husband the way it unsettles the wife. When he realizes that the graveyard gives rise to his wife’s anxiety, he assumes that the burial mound under which their child lies is responsible for her fixation. When he says that they “haven’t to mind *those*” tombstones of slate and marble in the family graveyard, he does not wish to disregard death as an important phenomenon or an event that causes deep grief, but instead speaks of “the child’s mound” (29) that the graveyard houses, and assumes that this has drawn his wife’s attention rather than the other markers of *his* people who have passed.

Though the husband in this poem understands that the wife’s *grief* is the result of their child’s death, his relationship with burial is different enough from hers to keep him from realizing that her grief and her *fear* are two very different emotions caused by different phenomena. The husband does not have a misguided or callous relationship with death; rather, he has a relationship with burial indicative of a world less industrialized and less impacted by the profession of burial, a world incompatible with that of his wife. While the husband represents a population for whom burial happened at home—families washed and dressed a body for burial, commissioned the coffin, dug the grave, transported the body to the gravesite, kept family cemeteries in rural areas, and answered to significantly less legislation about where and how burial could take place—these traditional rituals offer the wife no comfort. She much more likely represents a population for whom burial is legislated, confined to official public graveyards, and

carried out by participants in an industry. Frost's poem, published in 1914 on the cusp of the First World War and the onset of the modern period, brings together two characters representative of very different modernizing moments that clash dangerously in the face of a changing culture, and it does so by utilizing the practice of burial and very different, but very *human*, responses to it.

The cause for their miscommunication is not that the couple cannot agree on the significance of their child's death, but that they cannot agree on *how* to memorialize the child. The twenty-first century reader may understand the wife's grief much more readily than the husband's because the twenty-first century reader is expected—to some extent—to also share the wife's *fear* of the kind of burial with which the husband is associated. She grieves openly, refuses to discuss her grief and work through it, and sees a period of inconsolability as a necessary and understandable step towards healing. The husband indicates that he grieves for the loss as well and that he recognizes its importance in their lives, but does so in a much different way. He asks "What was it brought you up to think it the thing/ To take your mother-loss of a first child/ So inconsolably—in the face of love" (63-5). Though his query sounds insensitive on the surface, his intention is, in fact, to offer support. His question centers not on why the wife takes so seriously something that happens often to a lot of people, but rather on why she is so inconsolable—why she will not allow him to talk about the loss with her and help her grieve productively. He asks what about her upbringing led her to think that this was the most productive way to deal with death. He wants to know what about her childhood, her family, her relationship to dying and burial makes her think that separation from these things in the burial process—or the ceremony that comes with engaging in an industry in order to lay a loved one to rest—makes mourning easier. More pressingly, he wants to know what about that separation of

loved one from hands-on burial ritual makes mourning more significant. The wife clearly wants to hold on to her child's memory for as long as possible and wants the trappings of memorialization that come with modernized funereal practices. The husband, however, finds these memorializing impulses in a more traditional burial ritual. He follows the aforementioned question by saying, "You'd think his memory might be satisfied—" (66), but is cut off by his wife saying, "There you go sneering now!" (67), keeping him from expressing how he believes they should mourn the child and properly honor his memory. As a result, their miscommunication continues in relation to how to mourn the child and to how seriously the other is taking the loss.

Because the couple cannot agree on the best way to memorialize the child, the question that drives the wife's melancholy—What does a rotting birch fence have to do with their child's death?—represents stasis rather than constructive communication and productive mourning. The wife is horrified that the husband could come inside from digging their own child's grave and speak of mundane topics. Her horror accuses the husband and his suggestion that their child and the birch fence were somehow comparable. In other words, their now-dead child and the birch fence were both simply *matter* to the husband rather than mind, soul, memory, and love, drawing attention to the fact that the child's body will decay much like the fence, despite the burial ritual and their vastly different memorializing actions. She finally speaks of this horror and confesses to her husband that she finds his actions despicable, and soon she rails against the notion that "from the time when one is sick to death,/ One is alone, and he dies more alone" (100-1). Just as her grief for her lost son is different from her *fear* of the family graveyard outside their window, her grief for her lost son is different from the horror of realizing that death is a solitary experience. Her understanding of burial practices is that "Friends make pretense of following to

the grave,/ But before one is in it, their minds are turned/ And making the best of their way back to life/ And living people, and things they understand” (102-5). In a sense, the wife's experience with the husband's less modernized approach to burial has destroyed her ability to believe in the usefulness of burial altogether; however, that does not stop her from believing that at least trying to utilize what she sees as a proper burial would have been more appropriate than the burial the child received. The husband used the process of burial as a way of moving on from the grief, of working through the trauma of losing a child. The wife sees this as an affront to the child's memory because of her sustained mourning. In her view, rather than using the burial as a way to commemorate the child and preserve his memory, the husband has used the burial as a way of moving on quickly, and this show of disregard for their loss troubles her inconsolably.

Her indictment of the process of burying someone results from her association with more modern practices rooted in the burial industry. As this necessary element of life industrializes and becomes relegated to specific professionals, families no longer bury their dead as intimately as they once did. Burial becomes sanitized. Friends, as the wife points out, may go to the funeral, but their connection to the process of burying someone is so minimal that they are able to turn their minds away and make “the best of their way back to life/ And living people, and things they understand” (104-5). It is no secret to the wife that we as a culture have grown distanced from death and no longer understand burial since its processes have been co-opted by a profession. The wife's anger with her husband comes from her disapproval of his method of burying their son, but her overarching discomfort with death and burial is rooted more deeply in her

relationship with industrialized burial sanitized by the modern movement to separate the dead from the living.³

The rotting birch fence, then, represents the reality that organic matter rots, breaks down, and dies. The husband understands the reality of this fact, though he still laments its impact on his continued life, but the wife reacts to the same fact with horror. Their conflicting understandings of decay (since death ultimately brings the decay of the human body) result from their vastly different relationships with burial trends. The husband, who represents a demographic comfortable with home burial, maintains a closeness to the physical, material reality of death. Though he grieves for his son, he grieves productively. The wife, on the other hand, represents a demographic horrified by the idea of disposing of a body. The body is material while the soul, the mind, the love felt for that person—those things are ephemeral. The wife focuses on these parts of the child she lost and holds onto them so tightly so as to stay as close to the loved one as possible. The sight of her husband smudged with the dirt from her son's grave repulses her as much as his casual conversation about decaying birch branches in the face of something so tragic precisely because it reminds her of the materiality of the body that must be disposed of. She wants to keep what she can of her son nearby, to deny any kind of burial as a proper way to mourn his memory, but she is out of touch with the necessity of disposing of a

³ The wife makes no mention of her family or friends being embalmed, engaging the services of a funeral director, or any number of other things that define the modern funeral. However, she shows blatant outrage at the husband for digging their son's own grave when she says, "you that dug/ With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave" (76-7). She does not specifically say that the husband buries the child too soon, nor does she say that she needed more time with the body to make her peace. Her outrage is directly specifically at the oddity of the husband digging the grave himself. Before the onset of the funereal practices of the modern era, the husband's method for burial would have been seen as perfectly natural. The combination of this fact and the wife's outrage suggests that she is more comfortable operating with the modern industry.

corpse because she does not seem to realize what keeping her son from being buried would mean for his physical, material body. She represents a demographic influenced by the funeral industry in such a way that it has allowed her to deny the materiality of her son's body in favor of focusing on his memory and his spirituality. The wife asks how he could speak of such a thing as a rotting birch branch in the wake of their son's death while the husband asks how she could stifle any effort at productive mourning by refusing to talk about the death and the burial. The wife wonders how he could bring himself to bury his own child while the husband asks how she can avoid handling the loss, emotionally *and* physically. While the death of their son drives the poem, their conflicting relationships with burial are the actual central concerns.

Vast amounts of research and study focus on death as a trope, as an organizing force, as a recurring image, and as a force that serves various other functions. This study, however, asks how literature—specifically modern American literature—concerns itself with *burial*, and therefore performs the language that surrounds deathways. The husband and wife in “Home Burial,” while inherently concerned with the death of their child, expend much more energy engaging in the question of burial and commemoration than in the process of understanding death, and in so doing, are able to look away from death itself and focus instead on individualized reactions to it. Their inability to understand their conflicting relationships with burial practices gestures towards a broader crisis faced by the modern world. In a time of crisis, mass death, and cultural shifting, literature that examines death and, more specifically, burial is centrally concerned with the very human customs of mourning and memorialization. Further, this literature serves not only as a reflection of the meaning-making produced by these customs but also as a vehicle for meaning-making itself.

This study examines how literature portrays the impact of shifting of burial practices in the wake of the high death tolls of the battles of First World War and the rising need to industrialize such practices. The importance of burial is often espoused in poetry written by British soldiers in World War I. Modris Eksteins writes in *Rites of Spring* that “[f]rom its start, [World War I] was a stimulus to the imagination....Artists, poets, writers, clergymen, historians, philosophers, among others, all participated in the human drama being enacted” (208), indicating that the process of writing and the production of literature went hand-in-hand with the process of making sense of mass atrocities. Rupert Brooke, for example, wrote about the importance of wartime burial practices in “The Soldier,” which begins: “If I should die, think only this of me:/ That there’s some corner of a foreign field/ That is for ever England” (1-3). Brooke is referring to the practice of international military cemetery land donation in which one country would donate land to another so that fallen soldiers could be buried in their “native” soil. (In this case, France would donate land to England so that England’s dead could be buried in British territory.) Brooke’s poem memorializes the fallen soldiers he has lost while also preemptively memorializing him in the event of his death (which took place shortly after this poem’s composition). His work also speaks to the enriching nature of this burial practice, saying that France will be improved because after his death, or after the death of any British soldier in what was formerly French territory, “There shall be/ In that rich earth a richer dust concealed” (3-4). His burial in the poem, then, does not simply reference the importance of commemorating the fallen, and it does not only speak to the importance of writing as a memorializing force; it speaks also to the importance of burial in the process of remembrance and illustrates burial being inextricably tied to literature. His poem serves as a comforting reassurance for those he will

leave behind since they should “think only this”: that his burial was important to the Allies’ advancement and to the enrichment of France.

One timelier example is the digital Faulkner project that is taking place at the University of Virginia, which “ultimately aims to link the entire body of Yoknapatawpha fictions together and dynamically generate new, cumulative maps” (Bromley). The team, headed by Stephen Railton and consisting of about two dozen other Faulkner scholars, has designed this project for those studying Faulkner to visualize his stories in a way that centers on a digitized map of Yoknapatawpha County. The worth of this project extends beyond cartographical utility, however. The scholars have entered every character, place name, and location, along with various themes from Faulkner’s work into a database that links these important elements of Faulkner’s novels and short stories, allowing “scholars or students to study, for example, all black inhabitants and the roles they play in his texts, or Faulkner’s representations of violence, or religion, or family” (Bromley). The scholars involved in the project recently met at the University of Virginia to see the results of the computerized mapping of Faulkner’s places and themes, and found that one mapping algorithm placed death and cemeteries right at the center of Faulkner’s writing as a central, often-present theme in his Yoknapatawpha stories and novels. For a southern author often associated with gothic literature whose work hinges upon concerns with the losses of the South in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, perhaps it is no great revelation that death factors into his work prevalently. UVA’s digital map did not simply show death at the center of Yoknapatawpha County, though. It showed cemeteries—places of burial made up of artifacts of death and memorializing efforts—as the principal spatial mode through which characters and actions are linked to each other. The digital evidence of burial’s centrality to this major American writer’s work shows the need for further study of the theme in American

novels. Though we may not yet have digital projects of this magnitude mapping the prevalence of various themes and characters in the works of other important authors (like Willa Cather, John Dos Passos, Evelyn Waugh, and Dalton Trumbo, on whom this study focuses in addition to William Faulkner), this discovery in Faulkner's writing gives us digital proof—if digital proof were ever actually necessary—that the cultural importance of cemeteries and burial extends to the literature authors create in response to the world around them.

During times of mass death, periods of political turmoil, eras of war, and various other fluctuations of societies, cultural institutions—like burial and other deathways—change to accommodate their new surroundings. However, the significance of deathways and their ability to respond to crises of understanding lies in the fact that burial lends itself not just to meaning-making as a way of keeping the memories of our dead close to use while also spatially and materially segregating the world of the dead from the world of the living. Burial also lends itself to political use (as with soldiers' memorials after periods of warfare) and costly mechanized and commercial advances (caskets, embalming services, flowers, and other trappings of the modern funeral) that surround any industry in a modernizing era. Our ability to gain insight into this crisis of understanding by studying deathways is precisely what necessitates a study of deathways in the interwar period. By focusing on literature of this era, this study not only fills a gap that deserves more attention than it has received previously. It also illuminates the importance of cultural artifacts of mourning, like the concept of the permanent burial plot, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and international military cemeteries implemented during World War I, the body as a source of spectacle, and the urns and columbaria used in the practice of cremation. Further, this study illustrates dangerous and exploitive practices at work in an

industry that eventually appropriates the act of burial and therefore remains guardedly silent about its own extortion and corruption.

Early Modern Changes in Our Relationship with Death and Burial

We study deathways in fiction because of literature's inherent and long-lasting interest in the process of memorializing and meaning-making surrounding death, and the United States' relationship to deathways between the World Wars is no exception. Fiction of the interwar period often responds to aspects of death and burial that have a much longer historical context than simply that related to World War I. We cannot understand the importance of the interwar period to American deathways, therefore, until we understand that the changes to U.S. deathways that cropped up during the interwar period emerge from the advances in deathways during the nineteenth century, a period that saw significant advances in preservative technologies and burial practices and policies.

Before systems of sanitation, improvements in medicine, and various other modern advances, humankind was fairly close to and familiar with death. Michele Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* about the spectacle of the dead body, saying that society was once subjected on a large scale to “the ravages of disease and hunger, the periodic massacres of the epidemics, the formidable child mortality rate, the precariousness of the bio-economic balances” and claims that “all this made death familiar and gave rise to rituals intended to integrate it, to make it acceptable and to give a meaning to its permanent aggression” (55). He presents this argument in relation to the shifts in systems of punishment as enacted by those in positions of authority, but some specific elements of his claim also elucidate the history of funereal practices.

As Foucault points out, when people face widespread disease, hunger for which the readily available resources are no match, high rates of child death, and other hardships that shorten lifespans, they often experience death first-hand on a more regular basis than do people who belong to a population with low child mortality rates, adequate food sources, and more advanced medicinal and sanitation systems that lower the rates of disease and disease-related death. This point is pretty straightforward, but the second part of his claim—that “all this made death familiar and gave rise to rituals intended to integrate it, to make it acceptable and to give a meaning to its permanent aggression”—is where the modernization of death necessitates a bit more focus.

Though Foucault’s focus is primarily given over to European history, his progression can be traced usefully in relation to American funereal practices. He draws on the history of death to claim that its regularity prompted humankind to make sense of, justify, and give meaning to its occurrence. Though Foucault for the most part writes about living bodies, we can also read his theory of disciplining the body in relation to the dead. Corpses are not thrown into mass graves or buried unceremoniously in the modern period; instead, they are given individual plots, gravestones, and, eventually, in-grave vaults to hold the coffin and keep the body from breaking down and re-entering the earth. Cemeteries are laid out in neat, even rows, and larger cemeteries start to keep records of who is buried where so that the living can easily find their dead. The processes and practices of burial become highly disciplined in the modern era as a result of humankind’s need to make sense of a phenomenon drastically changed by modern warfare and disease. Foucault’s arguments suggest that changes in burial trends discipline the body in death to subsequently discipline bodies in life. His study, while concerned with meaning-making, is more primarily concerned with the systems of power that are created by these disciplining forces.

As the modern funeral industry arises, the power that it has over grieving loved ones becomes tangible, dictating the processes of mourning one must follow.

Joseph Roach explores similar historical phenomena in *Cities of the Dead* where he writes that “modernity itself might be understood as a new way of handling (and thinking about) the dead” (48). In a vein similar to Foucault’s, Roach reports that before the European Enlightenment, European tradition supported the ever-presence of the dead within living society in that the ghosts of the deceased were often perceived to be roaming around the cities and occupying places that were familiar to them. Further, their bodies were buried in “hopelessly overfilled churchyards and crypts” causing them to overflow “into the space of the living” (48). The coming of the Enlightenment, however, brought the separation of the dead from the living with separate cemetery plots, the introduction of which involved removing the place of burial to distant parks, and the implementation of memorial monuments since “continued observances” (50) of the dead were then much more difficult to maintain. Along with this separation of the dead from the living came the practice of separating the dead from the dead by providing individual burial plots complete with discrete spaces in rows (or columns depending on the burial architecture) with distinctive markers that featured names, dates, and other individualizing information. The dead were now remembered, tended to, and interacted with one by one as mass graves became less culturally acceptable and individual burial plots became the norm, even for those too poor to afford the trappings of a complete modern funeral. Such trends, of course, made their way to America as the New World was colonized, and as the funeral industry has grown, Americans have become farther and farther removed from understanding death as a natural occurrence, and as a result, we found ourselves fighting against the forces of decay.

Nineteenth Century Sanitizing Practices

The development of preservative technologies, shifting burial locations, increased popularity of embalming, and the rise of the funeral industry contribute to changes in the modern world's interaction with the dead from the mid-nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century. Jonathan Sterne writes in *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* that around the middle of the nineteenth century, Western civilization embarked on a “momentous battle against decay” that originated in the collective attitude toward decay's inevitability. This discomfort with decay arose over time as the living began to be more and more separated from their dead, and Sterne argues that Western discomfort with decay resulted in the development of processes like embalming, by which the Western world could postpone and avoid contact with the effects of deterioration. The effects of distancing Western civilization from decay through embalming are far-reaching, but Sterne's argument covers more than the prevention of bodily decay. He writes that the rise of embalming as a common practice came about in order “to preserve the bodies of the dead so that they could continue to perform a social function after life” (292). The social functions corpses perform are vast and varied. In Sterne's estimation, the mid- to late-nineteenth century waged this “battle against decay” in hopes of producing artifacts of cultural archival work. He argues that sound recording was “understood to have great possibilities as an archival medium” (288) since the moment of its inception, and the same is true of the preservation of the dead through embalming and the cultural, historical records that cemeteries began to provide during the first half of the nineteenth century. In doing so, however, Western individuals encountered decay less often and thus became increasingly more uncomfortable with it and less capable of understanding its effects.

The Rural Cemetery Movement, which consisted of moving burial plots from the center of towns to their outskirts, began shortly before the Civil War and continued the work that, Sterne argues, preservative technologies began by physically separating the world of the dead from the world of the living. Traditionally, people buried their dead in churchyard burial grounds in the center of their town or city. Bodies were not embalmed and coffins were designed to break down with the body once they were both in the earth. Burial plots were not meant to be permanent, and once a space was fit for another burial—after the body had decomposed enough for the land to be dug up again—another body was buried in that space. As populations rose across the Western world, so did the number of corpses in need of burial space. Churchyard burial grounds in the centers of towns became putrid sites of exposed decay. Stanley French writes that “[b]ecause of the rapidly increasing population the old graveyards became so crowded that they were frequently little more than stinking quagmires—chronically offensive and occasionally serious public health hazards” (74). In response, burial grounds moved from city centers to garden-like burial plots in areas comparable to present-day suburbs (French 70-81). French writes that from New England’s inception, the layout of its cities followed the trends set forth in England where “the standard places of burial had been amid the living—in the middle of towns, in churchyards or in churches....or in town commons” (70) and points out that this practice had prevailed in England since around the eighth century BCE. Before such a shift took place, however, burial yards “were treated simply as unattractive necessities” (71). Those who survived the deceased tended to believe that the dead did not care about the appearance of their final resting place and that the living should be focused “on a future life more glorious than any intimations of the terrestrial landscape” and believed it “futile, even vain, to worry about the situation of graves or the design of cemeteries” (Harris 103).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these attitudes started to shift. Various scholars cite differing motivations for these evolving attitudes. Some, like French, claim that these changes took place because burial spaces were becoming revolting and elicited many complaints from community members. Others, like Neil Harris and Michel Foucault, argue that as “civilization became, as we say very roughly, ‘atheist,’ that Western culture inaugurated what is called the cult of the dead” (Foucault “Different” 180-1). Basically, from the Enlightenment to the nineteenth century, the belief in immortality after death, traditionally solidified in the European and/or American worldview by religious fervor, began to wane, and “the living began to demand more certain means of communication with the dead.” Further, “[a]nxiety produced a search for proof of an afterlife,” which eventually produced a “greater physical interest in the dead” (Harris 103). Such research does, however, report that the state of the churchyards was often so ghastly that visiting was inconvenient, unsettling, or even impossible (Harris 103).

The movement to remove the dead from city centers began in the late eighteenth century but did not become an earnest endeavor until the early to mid-nineteenth century. The creation of the New Burial Ground in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1796 marked the first attempt in New England to move the cemetery from the city center to the outskirts of a developed area where burial plots could be permanent and could be maintained in such a way that loved ones could visit without fear of filth or horrifying surroundings and gain a “more certain means of communication with the dead.” In doing so, this shift in burial practices segregated the dead from the living, but it also created a sense of individualization for those who had passed away. Despite the fact that the New Burial Ground was visually unappealing and “was flat and mostly covered with short-lived poplar trees” (French 75), French reports that the cemetery “attracted much attention and was a major attraction for visitors of the New Haven area” (76)—leading to

beautification efforts that brought individuality to the burial plots. One of the New Burial Ground's most well known successors was Mount Auburn cemetery, founded in 1831, which stood out from the New Burial Ground in that it became the first garden cemetery in America and would inspire many foreign travelers to visit and try to emulate its design in other countries. The intended layout of this cemetery included lush flora, elaborate garden designs, and well defined family plots separated by ornate ironwork fences or hedges and shrubbery. Its creators/designers hoped it would be a pleasant place to visit rather than a space invoking fear or disgust.

With the founding of the New Burial Ground, Mount Auburn Cemetery and the dozens that came after them, the U.S. approach to funereal practices moved toward a concentrated focus on beautifying burial plots. The kind of individualism in death introduced by these kinds of burial practices dictated that preservation take on a more active role in these rituals. As burial plots became lasting sites to be maintained, the body came to be viewed as matter meant for longevity rather than decay. Expensive embalming practices and reinforced caskets designed not to break down in the earth became common—and expensive—elements of the modern funeral. Rather than focusing on what awaits the saved soul after death, Americans started looking for reassurance on earth that life did not end with death and did so by revering the funeral plot as a place of remembrance, celebration, and commemoration, thus creating secular forms of an “afterlife” and “immortality.” The burial plot, in other words, became an artifact meant to keep part of a loved one alive after his or her death, much as literature has attempted for centuries to act as an embalming force for the memory or legacy of someone who has passed away. When permanence and reverence replace temporality and necessity, attitudes about decay change drastically and public relationships with burial trends change accordingly.

The Civil War

Another contributor to the popularity and commonality of embalment was the U.S. Civil War. Many recently published studies lay out the importance of the Civil War to America's relationship not only to embalment but to other burial practices as well. William Blair and Drew Gilpin Faust (among others) have produced notable additions to this line of study (*Cities of the Dead* in 2003 and *This Republic of Suffering* in 2009, respectively) and fall in with a long line of research on American deathways that dates back, most notably, to Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death* in 1963. Mitford's text explores a vast history of deathways in America (and Europe, by extension). Though her study reaches well into the 1960s (and her revised and republished edition, *The American Way of Death Revisited* reaches well into the 1990s), several chapters include lengthy discussions of the rise of widespread embalming of soldiers in the Civil War era in the context of the rise of the commodification of the funeral industry in the United States. Mitford intended her study as an exposé of the American funeral industry, and many have read it as an indictment of under-the-table dealings and dishonest practices within the developing profession. The history of the industry that she includes in her study also establishes the rise of the U.S. as a leader in burial trends as a direct result of wide-scale embalming and expensive funereal practices while tracing the development of increased demand for decorative and costly coffins, an upsurge in the commodification of the American funeral, and the resulting rise of the funeral home as a marker of American industry and modernity (*Revisited* 141-49).

Faust and Blair have come to this discussion of the U.S. Civil War and its impact on burial much more recently. Rather than concentrating on the industry surrounding the history of burial in America, Faust and Blair take much more focused approaches. Drew Gilpin Faust's

This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War examines the changes the Civil War imposed on the lives of Americans now saddled with large-scale loss. In her preface, Faust writes that “[t]he number of soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865...is approximately equal to the total American fatalities in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined” (xi) and argues that “[d]eath’s significance for the Civil War generation arose...from its violation of prevailing assumptions about life’s proper end—about who should die, when and where, and under what circumstances” (xii). At the beginning of the Civil War, Americans were not unfamiliar with death. Infant mortality rates were high, but most believed that those who could survive the first few years of life when the body was weak and developing would almost certainly live into what we now consider middle age. The Civil War wreaked havoc on the population of young and healthy men as wars tend to do, felling them either by injury or disease, as diseases often spread much more quickly in war camps and training facilities than in civilian life (xii). But, as Faust writes, “[h]uman beings are rarely simply passive victims of death” (xv), and so her book aims to describe “the work of death in the American Civil War” (xiv) and the undertakings pursued by Americans during and after the Civil War “that history has not adequately understood or recognized” (xv). She writes that “[s]ome of the changes death brought were social, as wives turned into widows, children into orphans; some were political, as African American soldiers hoped to win citizenship and equality through their willingness both to die and to kill; some were philosophical and spiritual, as the carnage compelled Americans to seek meaning and explanation for war’s destruction” (xv-xvi), outlining the ways in which mass death in the 1860s created what she calls “a broader republic of shared suffering” (xv). Perhaps the biggest impact on U.S. burial practices that came out of this war was the adoption of embalming

for the average soldier, which eventually evolved into embalmment of all bodies as a common practice. Once practiced only in the richest of families or in cases of royalty, embalmment was now a staple of the burial process, allowing for longer periods of mourning and, by virtue of the necessity for a trained professional to perform the practice, the introduction of industrial products and processes into burial rituals (61-101).

Blair's *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South* focuses not solely on the death toll of the war and the deathways that morphed to accommodate it. Rather, Blair examines the struggle for nationalism between the North and the South that played out in cemeteries and commemorative practices for fallen soldiers after the war. He writes that after the war was over, "something as seemingly harmless as a public celebration—or the placing of flowers on a grave—provoked strong reactions, including life-threatening ones" (ix). Blair focuses on Emancipation Day and Memorial Day celebrations meant to memorialize soldiers who fought for the South to examine how the federal government suppressed commemoration in fear that it would lead to a second secession or second uprising from the former Confederacy. In other words, public displays of mourning were regulated and suppressed for political control. In this study, Blair is "more interested in how the past was used than in describing how it was constructed" (x). His primary concern is how the memory of the Civil War, its purpose, its massive death tolls, and its specific deathways were used as forms of social control and political advancement in the late nineteenth century, while also studying how the repercussions extend into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (x). Blair's study focuses on how these burial practices and commemorative artifacts related to the Civil War were utilized for political purposes long after the era of the Civil War ended, and his theories help decipher the political

and social motivations for comparable commemorative artifacts that came about as a result of World War I, impacting literary responses to interwar politics.

In both of these texts, the Civil War serves as a kind of touchstone in American burial history—and rightfully so. The massive death tolls that the United States encountered and the resulting rise in embalming certainly did lead to new and innovative funereal practices as Faust’s study illustrates. Blair’s work acts as a good counterpoint to Faust’s. As Faust focuses on the impact these practices had on the United States as a whole and the impact of large-scale mourning on the individual psyche, Blair chooses to focus on the divisive impact that these burial practices had on the relationship between the North and the South after the war’s conclusion. He studies Remembrance Day celebrations and graveside memorials to show that the North saw these large gatherings as opportune moments for the Southern states to organize another rebellion. As a result, mourning was carefully monitored and in many cases restricted.

These studies have laid significant groundwork for a study of the interwar period because the shifts they describe brought about unprecedented separation of the dead from the living in the United States. In the decades following the Civil War in which more than 600,000 soldiers died, the United States began to implement measures that ensured this spatial segregation. Embalming became the norm rather than the exception, burial grounds moved from the centers of towns to the outskirts, cemeteries were structured more like permanent gardens than ever-changing plots characterized by decay, and a service industry started to form around practices associated with burial that had often been the responsibility of the family (like cleaning the body, building or ordering a coffin, and digging the grave, among other duties).

Modernizing the Funeral Industry

The shift in America from mere funereal ritual to a funeral industry happened as funeral homes and burial agencies arose to handle the business of organizing funerals. Until the nineteenth century, the American family typically took care of the body and performed most of the duties associated with preparing the body for burial, including washing it, laying it out, wrapping it in the burial sheet, ordering the coffin from the carpenter in town, carrying the coffin to the churchyard, and digging the grave. Undertaking as a profession came about when people began charging for the organization of services such as providing the hearse and funeral carriages, commissioning the local carpenter to make a coffin, and hiring the sexton to dig a grave (Mitford 148). Thus the American funeral industry grew—as any other service industry does—out of a desire to shoulder a burden in exchange for money. Mitford’s landmark study includes a chapter entitled “Fashions in Funerals” in which Mitford points out that the American funeral industry in the twentieth century is markedly different from funeral processes in other places at other times in history. Today, funeral directors and funeral home owners laud funeral practices in America as traditional practices of the Judeo-Christian religion that serve loved ones by preserving the memory of the deceased (3-10). The major elements of the American funeral, however, are not traditionally Judeo-Christian practices and are based more on capital than religious ritual. Mitford writes, for example, that “[f]uneral flowers, today the major mourning symbol and a huge item of national expenditure, did not make their appearance in...America until after the middle of the nineteenth century, and only then over the opposition of church leaders” (147).

Mitford’s study reveals not just the industrialization of burial but the professionalization of burial as well. Out of the necessary process of burying those who have died came a thriving

profession marked by workforce hierarchies, profit margins, professional associations, and opportunities for skill development in the way of embalming techniques, approaches to dealing with grieving families, and so on. Further, the jargon of the new profession was closely monitored, and words like “undertaker” and “grave” were conscientiously replaced with “funeral director” and “interment space” to eliminate negative connotations the public might have developed about the unsavory elements of the practice. Changing the terminology from “undertaker” to “funeral director” sanitizes discussion of the practice by shifting focus away from images of literally taking a body underground and instead emphasizes the professionalization surrounding the necessity of burial. With this new terminology, a “funeral director” directs a funeral, drives its pacing, organizes all of its minutiae, and shoulders the burden of interring a loved one in a professional manner. Likewise, the term “interment space” connotes something much more industrialized and commodified. It is compartmentalized and sanitized; it is something purchased rather than a frightful hole in the ground, as the term “grave” had come to suggest (194). These “funeral directors” could join professional associations that met annually to discuss various topics, including progress in the field, new techniques for embalmmment or—eventually—cremation, changing trends taking place in other parts of the country, how to deal with the rise of the African American funeral home, how to handle challenges to a funeral home's honesty in the face of exorbitant and unstandardized prices, and myriad other concerns the industry faced. In short, the professionalization and industrialization of burial in the twentieth century marked the development of modern burial practices as we know them today—typified by commodification, market research, profits, and professional concerns.

Another markedly modern element of the funeral industry during the 1920s was the shift towards financing a funeral in conjunction with the funeral home a client planned to use. The rise of the industry created a desire among the clientele of these establishments for expensive and elaborate funerals. As a result, especially among black communities, funeral home owners eventually began to offer burial insurance, which required that someone pay into a burial fund every week or every month with the promise that they would eventually pay off their funeral expenses before passing away. Prior to this development, families sometimes sought burial insurance from various other sources. For much of the United States' population—especially African Americans, the working class, and the poor—“securing funds to pay for all of the accouterments of the modern funeral meant purchasing burial insurance” through fraternal orders or secret societies separate from the funeral home which often took very long to pay out, leaving the funeral home owner to front the cost of the funeral until he could secure the payment (Smith 87). As a result, black funeral directors began establishing their own systems of burial insurance in order to make their business run more smoothly and to ensure that they had a steady stream of business coming in for the foreseeable future. In less reputable establishments, a client could pay into a burial insurance fund for years, and upon the client's passing, the funeral director would encourage his or her family to spend even more money on a more expensive coffin or more elaborate flower arrangements than the burial insurance fund permitted. In other words, the funeral director continued to collect from the family of the deceased even after years of payments (which often amounted to more than the cost of a standard funeral) by exploiting the family's grief and sentimentality (Smith 84-89). Moving the process of financial planning for a funeral under the umbrella of the funeral home's authority along with all of the other elements of the modern funeral not only “transformed what had been a largely decentralized and multistage

funeral process into one uniform experience held under a single roof” (Smith 89), but also created a distinctly modern business that essentially commodified the human body once it became a corpse.

As the funeral industry has grown, Americans have become further and further removed from death as a natural occurrence and have thus become increasingly more uncomfortable with the presence of dead bodies. The modern funeral comes at a high price since it involves embalmmment, a headstone, a burial plot, a coffin, a funeral service, and copious amounts of flowers. Because of this, Americans from lower socioeconomic statuses were unable to follow this trend and thus be impacted by it. As a result, the industry started forming in the mid-nineteenth century, but did not become fully modernized until the 1920s and 30s when funeral homes and burial agencies formed in large numbers, cemeteries began to operate as businesses, professional associations formed, and funeral directors began to get rich.⁴ This progression—from ritual to industry, from early modern to fully modernized—constitutes the focus of this study.

Chapter Plan

The chapters that follow focus on literary responses to changes in burial trends during the interwar era in the United States. These changes include the effects of World War I on American burial practices, the rise of the funeral industry, cremation as a counterpoint to—and then as an extension of—this industry, and cautionary tales about entering future wars that would likely produce the same kinds of devastation and create increased contact with the dead. The first chapter in this project addresses burial practices and approaches to dying during the First World

⁴ See Mitford Suzanne E. Smith, and Prothero.

War. “Warring Bodies: World War I Burial Practices in *1919*, *Soldiers’ Pay* and *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*” establishes that World War I made it necessary for the living to encounter the dead in a more personal way causing new burial needs to arise, like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (which plays a pivotal role in the conclusion of John Dos Passos’s *1919*), the process of returning soldiers’ bodies for burial in the United States (a literal and figurative move explored in William Faulkner’s *Soldiers’ Pay*), and overseas military cemeteries (which pepper the chapters of John Dos Passos’s *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*). The latter was a practice that the U.S. had a particularly hard time facing because of its history of being the only nation in the world to practice returning soldiers to the homeland for burial. The practicality of burying a soldier far from home defines the burial scenes in this novel and illustrates the struggle inherent in dealing with large-scale death during a time of sanitized dying.

Chapter Two moves away from warfare to examine the effects of industrialization and commodification on the collective American consciousness as it relates to the treatment of a dead body. “Commodified Bodies: William Faulkner and Willa Cather in the Age of the Funeral Industry” examines Claude Wheeler’s (from Willa Cather’s *One of Ours*) attitude towards death and burial, which has arguably been shaped by the developments in the burial industry and changes that resulted from World War I. The chapter then examines how the industry progressed in the 1920s by looking at the differences in reactions to Addie’s body in *As I Lay Dying* (which exist in a rural context) and the reactions to Red’s body in *Sanctuary* (which exist in an urban context). During this time, the burial industry becomes much more industrialized and funeral homes, burial agencies, and funeral directors become much more common in the U.S., leading to exploitative burial practices, commodified burial procedures, and, by extension, commodified corpses.

In Chapter Three, “Burning Bodies: Co-Opting the Empowerment of Cremation in Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One*,” cremation serves as a response to industrialization because it is cheaper and allows grieving families to make end-of-life decisions based on avoiding the exploitative practices of the death industry. This practice gains momentum during the interwar period and allows for some reversing of the movement to separate the dead from the living since cremated ashes can—and often do—occupy the space of the living. This chapter will explore crematory acts as liberating acts by analyzing Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One*. Ultimately, as this novel shows, cremation gets co-opted by the burial industry and those who decide to cremate are pushed to engage in the same commercialized practices inherent in the burial industry. This novel—in conversation with those analyzed before it—traces interwar literary responses to the industrialization of cremation.

The final chapter, “Cautionary Bodies: Decay and Preservation Anxieties in Dalton Trumbo’s *Johnny Got His Gun*,” addresses changing views of burial in light of anxieties about the approaching Second World War. After the cultural shifts of the interwar period, Americans saw World War II on the horizon and were understandably concerned about entering another world war. This coda describes one such reason. The U.S. had had at least twenty years to figure out how to manage its dead in light of World War I and the changes it brought to the separation of the dead from the living, and a second worldwide military conflict would mean more high death tolls and would bring the living into direct contact with the dead again. The anxieties that fact creates about preservation and decay are the result of the inevitable onslaught of dead soldiers that accompanies wartime. Though Trumbo addresses events and challenges of World War I, this chapter approaches the novel as a cautionary tale about the impact World War II will

have on the world, on individuals, on the vast numbers of men who will die in battle, on the loved ones they leave behind, and on the treatment of their bodies after they have died.

Stephen Prothero argues that “[t]his new thing, the corpse, is...a powerful symbol, charged with meanings as many and varied as human cultures and individual personalities. The corpse represents, among other things, a threat to social order, an economic burden to the family, a reminder of our mortality, an offense to sight and smell, and affront to hopes of eternal life, and a reason to believe in the bodily resurrection” (1), and that the way we deal with this “new thing” is ultimately reflective of the kind of expectations we have about societal interaction and cultural development.

This project takes on an examination of the dead body in relation to many of these offenses to the world created by—and specifically and solely *for*—the living. It does so by examining the corpse’s demanding *presence* in interwar American literature that is made so prominent by its calculated *absence* in modern American culture. Many chapters in this study will focus on the corpse as an “affront to sight and smell,” among other central elements of social interaction, and the burial practices that surround our desire to escape those offenses. The corpse as “a threat to social order factors into many of these discussions as well. Though Prothero’s list is relatively comprehensive, to his list I would add that a dead body could also serve as a propagandistic tool for governmental use in times of war and conflict, which is where my study begins.

Chapter 1
Warring Bodies:
World War I Burial Practices in *1919, Soldiers' Pay*
and *One Man's Initiation: 1917*

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.
("It is sweet and right to die for your country.")
- Horace, Ode 3.2

As Stephen Prothero suggests in *Purified by Fire*, the corpse serves as “a threat to social order” (1), and the corpses produced during World War I are no exception. The United States’ decision to join the war effort in 1917 marked an increase in international interaction and cooperation. This amplified military effort indicated an intention to get involved in international politics on an unprecedented scale, and as a result, the U.S. came to understand the impact of a technologically advanced war effort on the human body. World War I produced corpses that reminded civilians that the “quiet afterglow of the nineteenth century” (Dos Passos, "Preface" 7)⁵ had been shattered by highly mechanized, widely broadcast, large-scale death. Though the warring did not take place on United States soil, the effects of the warfare were broadcast on the radio and in newspapers across the United States. Citizens consumed the news of the bloodshed

⁵ In his introduction to *First Encounter*, a re-printing of *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, Dos Passos used this terminology to refer to the period between the U.S. Civil War and World War I. His impression of the nineteenth century had much to do with American culture’s distance from violence and death that had developed in the intervening years.

overseas in quantities more massive than what was possible during previous conflicts, leading to intensified exposure to the effects of warfare despite the distance between U.S. citizens and the battlefields of Europe.

Just as war dead can introduce “a threat to social order,” with the right kind of planning and the right kind of memorialization, they can also be used as artifacts for the justification of war. As combatant nations struggled under the weight of high casualty rates, ideas for large-scale memorials and monuments, like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and international military cemeteries came to fruition. Though the United States resisted the influence of some international burial practices (like leaving buried soldiers in the land on which they fell and opting instead to identify entombed bodies and return them to the States for “proper” burial), it followed the examples of other combatant nations in the creation of monuments like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The kinds of burial imagery in John Dos Passos’s *1919* and *One Man’s Initiation: 1917* and in William Faulkner’s *Soldiers’ Pay* illustrate modern forces at work as a result of the cultural, technological and political changes brought about by World War I, including the need to bury and commemorate high numbers of war casualties and the practice of using war dead as tools for nationalistic justifications of warfare.

As the war progressed, and as authors attempted to make sense of the world’s first modern war effort, the indefinable nature of mass death and modernized killing began to come into focus. Modris Eksteins writes memorably in *Rites of Spring* that “[f]rom its start....the war exerted a singular fascination by its very monumentality and, as it progressed, its staggering ineffability” (208-09). Martin Howe in Dos Passos’s *One Man’s Initiation: 1917* addresses the ineffability of the atrocities of the Great War by focusing on the loss of American idealism that characterizes this time period. Howe is drafted into World War I and sees his time in France not

as an opportunity to help further the U.S.'s power in the world or to glorify his home country, but as a time to explore other ways of life. Both his frustration with his life at home and his time at war cultivate a respect for France's culture and an admiration for the political stances he encounters there during conversations with Socialist and other progressive thinkers. Howe comes to believe that the capitalist nature of warfare and the greed of American political decision-makers constitute the basis for war, not the need to keep U.S. citizens safe from foreign threats, so he turns a skeptical eye towards commodification and very pointed displays of national grief in the face of what he now recognizes as systematized murder.

In light of their skepticism about the usefulness of war, Howe and his fellow soldiers reference throughout the novel the prevalence and seemingly abhorrent nature of leaving American soldiers buried in European soil and the loneliness of the international military cemetery. Though burying soldiers on the land on which they died was common during European wars, this practice stood in direct opposition to the U.S.'s history of returning soldiers to U.S. soil for burial after they had fallen in battle. In creating these scenes, Dos Passos comments on the oddity of hasty wartime burial in the eyes of contemporary U.S. culture, which placed extreme emphasis and spent excessive amounts of money on elaborate burial practices meant to serve the living. Those Americans who survive the war would not be able to visit these overseas graves often (if at all) to mourn or remember; they could not use the funeral as a time to grieve and gain closure. For Howe and his comrades, then, international military cemeteries are not only lonely, sad places—they are places that cheapen the process of burial and rob the living of the very purposes behind burial practices.

William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* (1926) addresses the death (figurative and then literal) of Donald Mahon after his service in World War I by examining closely the burial imagery

associated with soldiers—living or dead—returned from conflict. The trope of having living soldiers returning to the United States provided Faulkner with a way of talking about the distinctively American practice of returning dead soldiers for burial. Writing about war, after all, necessitates writing about the death that results from the brutalities of war. The trope of figuring soldiers as dead bodies, and the need to respond to the distinct changes warfare imposes on the soldiers involved, coalesce when literature features a living soldier returning home who is figured as a casualty of war seeking burial. This particular novel concerns itself with the return of the soldiers after World War I and how they were to be dealt with regardless of whether they returned as living or dead bodies.

Wartime novels often utilized the trope of the living-dead soldier to draw attention to a soldier's expendability and focus the reader on the practice of using wartime death to propagate patriotic or nationalistic government-made decisions. Figuring a soldier as a dead man, then, is a logical result of associating almost certain death with a soldier's service. Faulkner figures Donald Mahon as a dead body upon his return home despite the fact that Mahon is still alive. His brutal scars make him either unable or unwilling to interact with those around him, and the doctor's declaration that he will die soon after his return may be based on internal injuries or on injuries to his psyche sustained during the highly mechanized and industrialized battles in which he fought as a pilot. His imminent death, despite his "survival" of warfare, causes the other characters in the novel to regard him as a dead man. Thus, *Soldiers' Pay*'s relationship to World War I burial practices allows a discussion of an important though complicated U.S. burial policy: the distinctively American practice of returning soldiers to American soil for burial during the United States' first European war.

The third and perhaps most well-known addition to burial trends to come out of World War I was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This tomb and memorial structure—now one of the U.S.’s most revered war memorials—was a French, Italian, and British invention that was later incorporated into commemorative and mourning practices in the United States when American congressmen and politicians were emotionally moved by the European nations’ interment ceremonies for their Unknown Soldiers. The last section of Dos Passos’s *1919* addresses the implementation of this memorial in the U.S. While the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier valorizes the U.S. soldiers who died during the conflict, Dos Passos’s account of this interment ceremony illustrates international cooperation in shifting memorial practices, but it also insists on an exploration of governmental exploitation of corpses created by international military efforts. In the name of honoring the dead, government entities around the world built memorial structures to reinforce the necessary nature of warfare and the noble sacrifice made by the soldiers who chose to go into battle.

The bodies in these texts and their places of burial are used for political purposes, and the inclination to use them in this way is not limited to the final section of *1919* when the Unknown Soldier is interred at Arlington. Whether the soldiers ruminate on the loneliness of overseas burial and the ridiculous nature of warfare that kills so many young men, as in *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*, or represent the return of dead bodies to American soil, as does Donald Mahon in *Soldiers’ Pay*, these novels respond meaningfully to the importance of burial and commemorative trends during and following wartime.

Interwar Effects

When the Great War started, Americans were faced with larger numbers of dead than they had experienced in the preceding decades. The overall death toll from World War I exceeded by far the death toll of the Civil War, so much so that was in no way comparable to the death toll from the Civil War. The United States accrued almost 117,000 army and coast guard deaths as a result of the conflict (Clodfelter 481) in comparison to Germany's 1.8 million military deaths and the United Kingdom's 624,000 (Ullman 85). The impact of World War I on the United States' relationship with death was nevertheless a heavy one. The majority of soldiers falling dead on the battlefield and being carried out of war hospitals on stretchers and in body bags may not have hailed from the United States, but overall, "some thirteen million men died" (Mosse 3) during the war effort. That is to say that "more than twice as many men died in action or of their wounds in the First World War as were killed in all major wars between 1790 and 1914" (Mosse 3). Further, conservative estimates of the overall death toll indicate that these numbers included "an alarmingly high proportion of civilian casualties, especially women and children" (Simon 27-8). Though the United States' death toll was lower than that of other combatant nations, the worldwide impact that this highly mechanized war had on warring bodies impacted the American psyche dramatically. The massive injuries, disfigurements, and ghastly deaths imposed upon these soldiers and civilians could now reach a broader public through radio shows and newsreels—"the one original contribution of the war to cinematography" (Mosse 148).⁶ Not since the Civil War had Americans been confronted with so many deaths in so

⁶ George L. Mosse's *Fallen Soldiers* posits that "the theatre made light of war, while film, for all of its often serious intent, offered mostly light entertainment" (144). Despite the fact that cinema and theatre served as escapism during this period, the newsreels that accompanied the films viewed at the theatre, the radio shows broadcast into the homes of Americans each evening, and the newspaper stories about the atrocities overseas were vast and impossible to

compact a span of time, and in those five decades, a great amount of effort had been expended to separate the dead from the living and sanitize the experience of losing a loved one. George L. Mosse writes that “[t]hrough modern war many met organized mass death for the first time face to face” (3). The soldiers on the battlefields encountered new ways of killing and of being killed, including wide-spread trench warfare, weaponized gas, and other approaches to fighting that defined a new era of warfare that changed not only these soldiers’ lives, “but also how the war was understood by future generations” (4). This was an age of technology that made killing easier and more depersonalized, but those impersonal and highly effective means of killing horrified the world as it watched all the more. This conflict not only brought death into the world in ways which humanity had no model for understanding, but it also brought this kind of incomprehensible death into a world recently sanitized from death’s impact on a body and the necessity of the living having to encounter and handle the dead.

A recent study by Pearl James entitled *The New Death: American Modernism and World War I* focuses on the shortsightedness of arguing that the United States was not impacted by the First World War as heavily as were other combatant nations. Though this argument is a tempting one to make, the highly mechanized nature of the war and the intensely shifting nature of dealing with the dead that the war forced upon Americans should not be understated. James points out that “the war disrupted people’s ability to prepare for, witness, and ritualize death according to customs of deathbed attendance, funerals, and burials” (7) that were established in the decades leading up to the conflict, but as the discussion of the Frost poem in the introduction suggests, these rituals were already disrupted by shifting modernizing forces. Wartime did impact such

ignore. The messages inherent to most of these news sources may have been jingoistic and intent upon promoting the validity and usefulness of the war, but the death tolls and the effects of warfare on the soldiers’ bodies could not be eliminated from the story at hand.

disruptions considerably further. This study hopes to extend the questions James raises in relation to wartime into the quieter moments that followed.

One way that combatant countries confronted the very modern form of mass death that World War I brought on was the implementation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which according to Laura Wittman, performs “a quintessentially modern confrontation with death” (7). She describes the institution of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as one “invented by the Italians, the French, and the British, in the last years of the war and in its immediate aftermath though it is clear that the concept of an Unknown Soldier was widespread in all combatant nations, including the United States and Germany” (3). Wittman’s study tends to focus on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Italy because it is “most representative of the new relationship between the body, mourning, and the nation” and because “it is here that we find the greatest divergence between official scripts and a host of other interpretations of the Memorial, ranging from spontaneous popular expressions of grief to complex literary and philosophical critiques” (4). Of course, Italy is not the only country in which these divergences of interpretation have cropped up, as this chapter aims to prove.

The purpose behind this particular memorial is to commemorate all of the soldiers who lost their lives during the war by housing one unidentified soldier in an elaborate tomb. Neil Hanson argues that the creation of this type of memorial marked a significant move because “rank and file soldiers had always been seen as the lowest of the low, the sweepings of the gutters. They were mere cannon-fodder and their names and exploits were rarely recorded or memorialized” (330). However, the war also worked in tandem with other forces shifting burial and commemorative practices during this time period. Wittman argues that “The Unknown Soldier was at once a representation of the body of the nation and of the human body, both felt to

be ruptured, perhaps permanently, by the war and by modernity” (3). The modern world necessitated a change in the process of meaning-making in relation to death and mourning because of “the rise of nationalism, scientific and technological innovation, secularization and religious pluralism...and multiculturalism all contribute to a crisis in mourning” (6) that contributed to the need to commemorate the masses of war dead and make sense of the widespread loss the war inflicted on the involved nations. “In short” Wittman writes, “by the end of the First World War, death was something that Western culture could no longer interpret adequately, and this is what the Unknown Soldier Memorial sought to expose and explore” (6).

The first suggestion for this practice dates to 1916 and is credited to David Railton—a clergyman in the Church of England who served on the Western front until the Armistice in 1918. Neil Hanson writes of Railton that during combat he “was so moved and inspired by a marked grave of an unidentified soldier that the image of this grave stayed with him as something very telling and important about the Great War” (329). Many of his surviving letters from the war mention this inspiration, and after the war he resolved to “do what he could to ensure that the body of one ‘Unknown Comrade’ [language used in one of his letters] would be brought home for a symbolic burial that would also lay to rest the hundreds of thousands of missing men of the British forces who had no known grave” (Hanson 329). By the time Railton was able to garner support for his proposal, however, his conception was no longer a unique one. France had already initiated a plan to bring home and reinter its own *poilu inconnu* (a French term that describes unknown French soldiers specifically from World War I) near the Arc de Triomphe. Monsieur Binet-Valmer, a war veteran and the president of the League of Section Heads, originally put forth the proposal for this memorial. Because this proposal had garnered so much support in France, *The Daily Express* in England launched a campaign to bury an

unidentified British soldier to act as a symbol for all of the fallen British soldiers. The success of this campaign bolstered Railton's proposal, which he outlined in a letter to the Dean of Westminster Abbey in August of 1920. In this outline he included his insistence that the only appropriate place for a shrine for the Unknown Soldier was Westminster Abbey where British royalty is buried (Hanson 330-331). France and the United Kingdom interred their Unknown Soldiers on Armistice Day in 1920, and the U.S. interred the remains of the American Unknown Soldier on Armistice Day, November 11, 1921.

The first suggestion that the U.S. bury an unknown soldier as a form of symbolic commemoration came from American Brigadier General William D. Connor on October 29, 1919. He pitched his idea to the US Army Chief of Staff, General Peyton C. March, but March was dismissive of his idea. Not until December of 1920, when Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. was "moved by accounts of the ceremonies in England and France the previous month" was the idea raised again, this time "attracting broad support from both sides of the House, General Pershing, the American Legion, press and public" (Hanson 412). Though Congress approved the expenses of building the Memorial Amphitheater (where the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is located) in 1913 and began work on the Amphitheatre in 1915 (Holt 338), the monument was not originally conceptualized as a home for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Amphitheater was completed on June 30, 1919, and dedicated on May 15, 1920, and the U.S. interred the Unknown Soldier six months later on Armistice Day (Holt 338).

Originally, Judge Ivory G. Kimball envisioned this memorial as a supplement to burial, as a place to commemorate fallen soldiers rather than a gravesite. The motivation behind a memorial like the Memorial Amphitheater is very different from that of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, however. Neil Hanson argues that the implementation of the Tomb of the

Unknown Soldier in combatant nations was necessary from a commemorative standpoint because “[t]he grieving families” of many fallen soldiers “were robbed even of the consolation of a funeral and a grave-site, and for them the grave of the Unknown Warrior...became the tomb and tombstone of their lost loved ones. In almost every other combatant nation an unknown soldier was also buried at some national shrine and, just as in Britain, each at once became the focus of a pilgrimage that continues to this day” (xv-xvi), Hanson illustrates here that the practice of actually interring an unidentified body serves a different purpose—a grave to visit, a site at which to mourn the dead—than the purpose the Amphitheater serves, whose purpose centers less on commemorating the dead and more on honoring them. On March 5, 1921, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law Congress’s resolution that authorized “the exhumation and return of one unidentified American soldier, for reburial in the new Memorial Amphitheater of Arlington National Cemetery on Armistice Day” (Hanson 412).

Neil Hanson argues that America’s motivation for creating this type of memorial was in line with Britain’s motivation—politicians “hoped that by creating monuments and rituals commemorating the military victory, they might help to heal, or at least ‘camouflage’, the social divisions caused by the war....The Unknown Soldier, it was hoped, would both validate the war and provide just such a unifying symbol” (412). Wittman argues, though, that the monument’s celebration of anonymity was the more significant element of its symbolism and the tombs act as “a shocking acknowledgement of modern warfare’s unprecedented reduction of the individual to an expendable cog in the machine” (9). She does not argue that the Unknown Soldier memorials project pacifist overtones; instead, she posits that they “sought to commemorate the psychological and social conflict of veterans, and of a culture that rejected mass death as

incomprehensible and dehumanizing yet needed desperately to feel that so many had not died in vain, that suffering and death could still have a common, communicable meaning” (9).

In some cases of wartime burial, one nation would dedicate a portion of its own ground to other combatant nations free of charge or taxation in order to ensure that the military dead be buried on “native” soil. Since worldwide warfare has not occurred on American soil, leaving American soldiers buried in overseas cemeteries was a custom that the United States had not yet considered and was not inclined to accept as an overarching practice. War within the United States necessitated the formation of cemeteries and burial performances in places that made geographic and economic sense and that did not create the need for extensive transportation of bodies (the most notable example being the cemeteries formed during and immediately following the Civil War). As Dean W. Holt observes in *American Military Cemeteries*, “The Spanish-American War in 1898 and the Philippine Insurrection in 1900-1901 marked a new era in the history of American burial policy. It was probably the first time in history that a country at war with a foreign power had disinterred its soldiers who died on foreign soil and brought them home to family and friends” (2). Every war in which the U.S. had been involved up to this point had been fought on U.S. soil, allowing the nation to establish a tradition of burying its soldiers within its boundaries. Upon reaching into international conflict, the U.S. maintained this tradition rather than leaving soldiers buried in other countries. A group of civilian morticians called the Quartermaster Burial Corps disinterred American soldiers buried in mass or poorly marked graves, identified the bodies, and then gave the fallen soldiers’ next of kin the option of having the soldier buried in an international American cemetery overseas or having the soldier’s body shipped home for burial. If the next of kin chose the latter option, the body was embalmed in preparation for shipment home. Upon return of the body to American soil, the next of kin then

had the option to reinter the soldier in a private or national cemetery (Holt 2-3). The United States thus became the only country to offer this practice as an option to the families of soldiers, and still holds this status today.⁷ In fact, many national cemeteries in the U.S. had to cope with the reality after World War I that fallen soldiers were coming home in such high numbers that national (and several private) cemeteries had to be expanded, reorganized, and in some cases relocated in order to accommodate the masses of war dead returning to American soil (Holt 185).

Because the U.S. was so accustomed to returning its soldiers for burial at home, the necessary practice of leaving soldiers interred overseas (even if only temporarily) created tension for those at home waiting for closure on their lost soldiers. That tension—often exemplified in American novels of the First World War—marks shifting understandings of death as reflected by changes to deathways. Burying a fallen soldier in the land on which he fought and died was common among European nations—as evidenced by the nationalistic message communicated by the speaker of Rupert Brooke’s aforementioned poem “The Soldier.” European nations viewed this donated land as territory that belonged to their country and felt that burying soldiers on the land where they died was not only proper and respectful but also a way to spread the influence of their nation.

The option of international burial was extended to American soldiers during and after World War I, and it was an option U.S. forces initially had to acknowledge and take advantage of due to slower transportation options and economic restrictions. The United States refused to follow suit entirely, though, and continued the practice of sending soldiers home for burial in U.S. soil. Conveniently located graveyards and graves dug out of necessity characterize almost

⁷ The United States does not, however, perform the same services for foreign soldiers who die on American soil. Many German and French POWs who died in American POW camps are interred in American national cemeteries.

every lengthy military dispute, but they made the U.S. practice of sending bodies home for burial exceptionally difficult. After World War I, the U.S.'s federal government formed the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC, 1923) to maintain these international American cemeteries, re-label the graves, and aid in the commemoration of American soldiers where they fought and died. The still active Quartermaster Burial Corps would later disinter buried American soldiers, identify the bodies, and give the fallen soldiers' next of kin the option of having the soldier buried in an international American cemetery or having the soldier's body shipped home for burial. If the next of kin chose the latter option, the body was embalmed in preparation for shipment home. This was coupled with the rapid urbanization of American cities and already decreasing burial space and resulted in an extension (of sorts) of the Rural Cemetery Movement.

On top of the concerns about burial space once on American soil, the act of shipping a body home for burial was often difficult in its own right. Pearl James writes of the confusion and concern inherent in this practice in *The New Death*, arguing, “[f]amilies wrote to the war department asking ‘Are the bodies of the soldiers who died now embalmed?’ ‘What kind of casket has been used for burial?’ ‘Will it be possible to allow relatives to have caskets, containing bodies returned to this country, open for inspection?’ ‘Can a tentative date for starting removal of bodies to this country be given?’” (22). The overwhelming majority of families of fallen soldiers wanted the bodies of their loved ones returned for burial, but as James points out, families often waited for years for their loved ones' arrivals, and in some cases, these periods of interrupted and prolonged mourning lasted well into the 1920s as families awaited the delivery of the bodies of their fallen soldiers (22-3). It stands to reason, then, that interwar literature would focus on the fallen soldier or the irreparably changed soldier in the wake of ghastly warfare, and

that “American modernist writing repeatedly portrays the ‘work of death’ as unfinished, unsatisfactory business” (James 22)—terms that certainly describe the relationships with death and burial inherent in Dos Passos’s *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*.

***One Man’s Initiation: 1917, International Military Cemeteries,
and Soldiers Figured as Dead Bodies***

For Martin Howe and many of his companions in *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*, disappointment with American idealism is inseparable from disillusionment with the war. While they do not *idealize* France, they do enjoy its novelty in light of their disappointment with the United States’ international military involvement. From the beginning of the novel, Dos Passos figures Howe as a voice of reason amidst overzealous enthusiasm for war and bloodshed.⁸ In this first chapter, as Howe makes his way to France to join the war efforts, Dos Passos describes him as being the happiest he has ever been in his life (45), but this happiness does not come from his dedication to battle. Throughout the novel he speaks often about the idiocy of the war, the hopelessness of it, and the notion that “it isn’t natural for people to hate that way” (72), the way he believes it is necessary to hate in order to kill. As early as the first chapter, shortly after being described as happy while he is in transit to France, Howe voices skepticism about the war and its motivating factors, saying “I wonder if it’s all true...” (47), alluding to the widely broadcast

⁸ Kenneth Holditch discusses Howe’s position on this foolish approach to war thoroughly in “*One Man’s Initiation: The Origin of Technique in the Novels of John Dos Passos*.” It should be noted, however, that Howe’s understanding of the nature of war and the United States’ childish and uninformed support of it exists despite his naiveté throughout the novel that any one concept (be it a certain kind of politics or a certain kind of warfare, etc.) could serve as an answer to all of humanity’s troubles. Lois Hughson discusses Howe’s disconnectedness from the war and his naiveté in relation to Dos Passos’s first attempt to convey the impact of World War I that resulted in his “realization of the failure of his traditional technique to embody what the war meant to him” (49).

reports about German atrocities. By the end of the novel, Howe's anti-war sentiments and anti-American-idealism have strengthened, and he proclaims to his fellows Lully, Dubois, Merrier, and the unnamed blond Norman that the U.S. does not fully understand the war, that Americans "are like children" who believe everything they are told without question, and that he has come to consider the United States' involvement in the war "a tragedy" (157). His friend, Tom Randolph, adds that the nation's entrance into the war eliminates its "only excuse for existing" (157)—the separation from corrupt European politics that came with the States' victory in the American Revolution. Howe carries Randolph's declaration further by arguing, "all the quiet and the civilisation and the beauty of ordered lives that Europeans gave up in going to the new world...gave them opportunity to earn luxury, and, infinitely more important, freedom from the past, that gangrened ghost of the past that is killing Europe today with its infection of hate and greed and murder" (157). For Howe, a nation's past marked by hatred and greed and systematic murder of young men leads a country to rot under the demands of a new, more modern age.

Howe may be fed up with American idealism, but that fact owes to his recognition of the United States' squandered opportunity to lead the world to a new kind of freedom. Howe does not dislike the U.S. so much as he dislikes the fact that the U.S. used nationalistic ideals and false slogans to pull people into supporting its entrance into the war. He has enjoyed his travel to France (as much as one could while running an ambulance to and from attack zones) because it has exposed him to a new and adventurous environment, but he does not think that France is free from the kind of problematic nationalism and problematic government that he sees in the U.S. Howe and his companions do not admire France because of the valor that supposedly comes from war or because they find European nations somehow more admirable than their own country. In fact, he laments that the U.S.'s entrance into the war has made it into a "military

nation, an organised [sic] pirate like France and England and Germany" (157-8). Instead, they admire France as an exoticized land in the absence of admiration for the United States.

These characters' love for "othered" places takes them overseas and therefore positions them for overseas burial in international American cemeteries. At several points in the text, Dos Passos depicts burial grounds and makeshift cemeteries, both from a distance and in a tactile, tangible manner. In one short and powerful scene, the narrator describes from a distance the "close-packed wooden crosses" that mark the soldiers' burial ground, from which is coming "the sound of spaded earth" (113). He also includes imagery of "wheeled carts piled with shapeless things in sacks [that] kept being brought up and unloaded and dragged away again" (113). This particular burial scene is distant and depicts bodies that are so depersonalized and so stripped of individuality that the narrator does not even describe them as bodies, but instead as "shapeless things in sacks." The narrator's language here suggests that these burial grounds grow quickly as collection of impermanent and conveniently located makeshift graves, the temporary nature of which negates one of the most important tenets of modern burial—namely the ability to mourn a loved one at a known and maintained location.

The major tenets of war burial for Dos Passos in this novel consist of maintaining the autonomy of a soldier's body's and focusing on the sacrifices he made during his service, but they also illustrate that a soldier's death inadvertently reveals the economic basis of warfare. Despite the prevalence of burial imagery in this novel, one of the few scenes that features an *actual* burial makes up the entirety of a short section inserted in chapter seven. A group of men charged with burying the war dead in one of the hastily built international American cemeteries finds itself with a conundrum. The section starts with the sergeant of the stretcher-bearers saying "It's a shame to bury those boots" (140), as the stretcher-bearers are about to lower the body of a

dead soldier named Lieutenant Dupont—the only character actually named in the scene, as if burial has returned the individuality that industrialized trench warfare strips from living soldiers—into his grave. The sergeant touches on one of the crucial questions of warfare. On the one hand, boots are expensive commodities during wartime—commodities that a still-living soldier can put to actual use. On the other hand, the boots are the dead soldier's property, so removing them would be comparable to stealing, even though the dead soldier no longer needs them. How, then, can the sergeant maintain the autonomy and dignity of the soldier's body? Several of the sergeant's men respond, saying "Shall we take them off? It's a shame to bury a pair of boots like that," and "So many poor devils need boots," and "Boots cost so dear" (140). The men in this scene present valid concerns; boots became exponentially expensive as the war wore on. The scene, then, presents the question of balancing the value of the living against the value of the dead. The stretcher-bearers choose to recognize the fact that Dupont died because of his duty in the military and, as such, he died a soldier, so harvesting his gear from his body would be a gesture of disrespect. They only hesitate once more while lowering Lieutenant Dupont into the ground when another stretcher-bearer asks them to wait because he has found an available coffin for the dead soldier. The stretcher-bearers bury Dupont with his boots still on, and though the sergeant clearly feels a bit uncomfortable burying something "so dear nowadays" (141), the burial scene carries an air of respect and pride as a result of the decision to forego harvesting Dupont's gear and show respect to his body.

Chapter ten, though, dashes any comfort the reader takes in the stretcher-bearers' respect for Dupont's body, when Howe visits a cobbler who has taken up shop in soldiers' quarters. Howe is looking to buy shoelaces, and this man has made a business out of carving the discarded boots of dead soldiers into shoelaces to sell to soldiers still alive. Dos Passos describes the

cobbler surrounded by "piles of old boots, rotten with wear and mud, holding fantastically the imprints of the toes and ankle-bones of the feet that had worn them" (171). The anxiety that Dos Passos inserts into this scene is comparable to the anxiety expressed by the stretcher-bearers earlier in the novel, but Howe does not seem to feel that anxiety. He notes the way the candle light makes the boots appear to "move back and forth faintly, as do the feet of wounded men laid out on the floor of the dressing-station" (171), and laughs nervously as he tries to make conversation with the cobbler, but the moral conundrum faced by the stretcher-bearers over what to do with a soldier's boots after he has died does not exist for Howe and the cobbler. The cobbler talks openly about procuring the boots from the nearby hut where the burial crews "pile up the stiff[s] before they bury them...leav[ing] lots of their boots around" (172). He goes on to point out that "Some day another fellow will be making laces out of mine" (172), indicating that the boots are tied more to a representation of a wartime life cycle rather than a symbol of bodily autonomy. By the end of the novel, the boots have come to symbolize something separate from a dead soldier's body. The boots are no longer kept on the soldiers as they are carried off for burial. Instead, the soldiers and the boots are discarded in two separate piles, indicating a separation of body from commodity that signals the need for material goods that keep the war going. This separation, coupled with Lully's declaration in the previous chapter that "The rich must be extinguished; with them wars will die" (163), suggests that a country's economic gain that comes from engaging in warfare acts as more than simply a connection Dos Passos hints at in this novel, but one the characters are acutely aware of. By the end of the novel, despite his naivety in the face of war tactics (Holditch 115-8), Howe has come to realize that as far as modern warfare goes men are replaceable but boots are not. The governments that run the war can draft more men, but the production of boots is too slow and costly to keep up with the wear and tear of

warfare. In other words, the sovereignty of the body and the respect for individual lives disappear in the face of the need to fuel war, but the burial practices that follow war death attempt to obscure the interchangeability of soldiers.

Dead and dying soldiers become more prevalent as the novel progresses, further reducing the individualism of the fallen. This imagery of death and interchangeability colors the novel as thoroughly as burial imagery. Both make a distinct imprint on Howe as he becomes notably familiar with the difference between a living person and a dead body and with the power of warfare to perform burial on its own. One of Howe's first encounters with the bodily effects of war comes when he encounters the body of a man who had a grenade explode in his pocket, and the description of his mangled body is colored by Howe's attempts to make sense of what the body looked like before being mangled. Howe cannot take in the sight instantaneously; he has to absorb it slowly, comparing the abdomen and legs that are now just "a depression, a hollow pool of blood" (71-2) to the space "[w]here the middle of the man had been, where had been the curved belly and the genitals, where the thighs had joined with a strong swerving of muscles to the trunk" (71). Howe thinks of this man often, and of all of the other "huddled, pulpy messes of blue uniform half-buried in the mud of ditches" (108). Warfare, in other words, performs acts of burial without the help of the burial corps. Dust, dirt, and mud all serve similar purposes in this novel. When these elements appear, they generally point to soldiers being buried by warfare. The dirt that falls on Howe's face in chapter four as he tries to sleep in a barn during a bombing foreshadows burial to come. Dust accompanies the soldiers that pass Howe and Randolph as the camions take them off to battle. Dust chokes and confuses and gets kicked up and rises in the wake of the vehicles carrying the soldiers off to war. Mud, however, serves as a substance that a body can sink into. When Howe and Randolph visit the theater while they are on leave, one of

their Australian companions makes a toast to mud, saying "The war'll end when everybody is drowned in mud" (94), suggesting an awareness of the ability for warfare to kill and bury soldiers without the actual agency of a person to perform the burial. This declaration resembles those of the soldier who goes mad towards the beginning of the novel and tries to stab his sergeant-major because he believes the only way to end the war is to "kill everybody, kill everybody" (79). In various scenes in the novel, mud becomes thicker and more present as soldiers move closer to battle. The transport returns from battle covered in mud. The very first graveyard scene in the novel features men covered in mud digging graves, as if they are burying themselves. In the aftermath of battles, soldiers and mules are depicted "huddled...half buried in the mud of the ditches" (122) near camions that have been blown up and overturned. The mud that marks miserable battles in this novel also seems to suck soldiers into it, burying them—living or dead—in the land on and for which they fought. Even though the U.S. government did not condone overseas burial during World War I, the voracious landscape and the brutal practices of war have introduced the practice regardless, causing soldiers to be buried overseas and mourned from afar. Dos Passos presents this practice as a cause of anxiety for his contemporary readers. These burials convey abandonment as loved ones are buried in impersonal graves and then left behind in Europe.

This consistent juxtaposition of the soldier's body with imagery of death and burial positions these soldiers as dead bodies even while they are still alive. Howe's first recognition of the effects of war comes as he sits at a cafe on a quiet afternoon shortly after arriving in Paris. A woman "swathed in black crepe veils" and a bandaged soldier take their seats at a table near him. Howe finds himself staring into a young-looking face with a "triangular black patch" where the soldier's nose should have been "that ended in some mechanical contrivance with shiny little

black metal rods that took the place of the jaw" (54). The soldier's eyes look frightened, as if he either experiences shell shock or perhaps finds himself unsure of how to navigate the world with his newly disfigured face. Howe describes the soldier's eyes as being like "those of a hurt animal, full of meek dismay" (54), and finds that he cannot look away from them. The impact of modern warfare on a soldier's body is horrifying in this passage, but of particular interest is the woman's mourning attire. She interacts with this soldier as if she were his mother. Although he has not died, she still dresses in mourning. Perhaps she has lost another son or loved one, but the juxtaposition of this disfigured soldier and this mother figure suggests that the impact of the war on this soldier's body has caused his figurative death within his family. He will never exist as he did as a young boy before the deforming effects of modern warfare, so this mother figure mourns. Perhaps she mourns the loss of his boyhood, the loss of her son as she knew him, or even the simple loss of his face that carried "the chubbiness of boyhood" (54) that Howe can still make out behind the prosthesis that has replaced his nose, but nevertheless, she mourns. After seeing the soldier, when Martin looks in the faces of his fellow soldiers or the eyes of beckoning women he sees the injured soldier. These injuries were so commonplace that Martin sees them on healthy people, suggesting that even those untouched by the physical effects of modern warfare already resemble dead bodies.

References to the smell of a soldier's body, a soldier's blood, and a soldier's sweat permeate descriptions of the barracks, hospital tents, and the French landscape. One particular encounter with these smells of death and bodily decay takes place when Howe and Tom Randolph enter a hospital tent and are caught by "[a] stench of sweat and filth and formaldehyde" that gives "them a sense of feverish bodies of men stretched all about them, stirring in pain" (76). The soldiers are further described as being "cadaverous" (111); they have a

“dirty smell” (79) and they give off the stench of “chloride” and “filthy miserable flesh” (148). Not only are these soldiers injured and dying, but they are being targeted by enemy fire. Howe listens to one account of an enemy plane “chas[ing] an ambulance ten miles along a straight road...trying to get it with a machinegun [sic]” (58). Warfare does not just perform burial on its own; it also targets the sick and injured, ensuring high death counts and the necessity of overseas burial. Furthermore, with the prevalence of chemical warfare during this military conflict, gassed soldiers abound, and they are treated as if they are already dead. The soldiers reflect on the fact that the gas “corrodes the lungs as if they were rotten in a dead body” (47), and the gassed soldier that Howe and Randolph rush to the medical tent after a battle is labeled “pretty near dead now” (125) and not offered much medical attention. Soldiers who are injured, soldiers who are gassed--essentially, soldiers who go to war--are doomed to a soldier's death. For Dos Passos, if something as specific as an enemy's bullet or bomb or gas explosion does not extinguish a soldier, the sheer practice of warfare will.

Because modern warfare disfigures a body so thoroughly, Howe begins to see death, in the words of Stephen Prothero, as “a kind of alchemy” (Prothero 1). Merrier, one of Howe's companions at war, says on the way to battle that he has expected to die every time he has gone to battle, but that he does not expect it this time for some reason, so he thinks this might be the battle that kills him. Howe has a hard time seeing the connection between this lively person and “those huddled, pulpy masses of blue uniform half buried in the mud of ditches” (108), thinking “Dead he [Merrier] would be different” (108). Shortly after this, and for the duration of the novel, Howe starts playing around with the idea of his own death. He imagines what his body will feel like when he has been shot and killed. His reflections on his supposedly imminent death are indignant and skeptical. He thinks that it is “silly that he might be dead any minute,” asking,

"What right had a nasty little piece of tinware to go tearing through through his rich, feeling flesh, extinguishing it?" (149). The bullet would not simply extinguish Howe's life; it would extinguish his physical flesh, changing his form completely as he moves from life to death.

As Howe encounters more seasoned soldiers and experiences more death, his frustration with warfare and the governmental greed that necessitates systematized large-scale death grows stronger. Such encounters take place in "tobacco-stinking, sweat-stinking rooms" (85) and are often accompanied by soldiers gambling against death with the "death-dance of the guns" in the background (86). He juxtaposes the soldiers gambling with money and warring nations gambling with soldiers' lives. The stark comparison, along with Howe's assertion that the kind of hate that seems to propagate warfare cannot be a natural human emotion, suggests that something else besides hatred serves as the impetus for war. The overt Socialism in the conversation at the poker game attended by Howe, Randolph, Merrier, Lully, Dubois and the unnamed blond Norman draws attention to the capitalistic motivations for warfare and to the fact that the perpetuation of war is politically motivated by greed. Each soldier reflects on what he believes is the impetus for war, the solution to such a destructive human activity, and the way to rid the world of such violence, and much of the remaining conversation centers on Socialist worldviews (which Dos Passos was likely trying to promote). This lengthy chapter illustrates the idea that when soldiers become pawns for political and capitalistic gain instead of human lives being gambled away, hate is removed from the equation and is replaced by avarice.

Dos Passos figures these soldiers as fodder for war, fighting for a nation that gambles their lives away by positioning them as dead bodies that can be disposed of easily. The soldiers in this novel often play cards themselves, gambling against the backdrop of whistling shrapnel and exploding bombs. In chapter four, for example, Howe sits in a dugout watching his

bunkmates gamble. They invite him to play, but amidst the sounds of battle outside the dugout he decides he does not want to join because "it would be so silly to be killed in the middle of one of those grand gestures one makes in slamming the card down" (85) on the gambling table. He then makes a direct connection between gambling and dying at war by reflecting on "all the lives that must, in these last three years, have ended in that grand gesture" (85). Howe not only zeroes in on the commodified nature of warfare, realizes that the practice of war risks the lives of young men, some of who are seeking valor while others are forced into battle via conscription. He asks at the end of the chapter, "Is it death [the soldiers] are playing, that they are so merry when they take a trick?" (86), indicating a recognition that all participation in warfare is a gamble and that what is at stake is not simply money (though for the men in office who make the decision to go to war, money is a very real motivator), but actual human lives. Howe and many of his companions become acutely aware by the end of the novel that the monetary motivations of warfare are sought and enjoyed by men who do not go to war themselves, leaving those who do participate at the mercy of men they will never meet. The decisions are depersonalized and dehumanized, leaving the soldiers figured not just as dead bodies, but also as commodities to be gambled away. Towards the end of the novel, Howe begins to see the battlefields, woods, dugouts, and other spaces upon which the violence of warfare is enacted "as a gambling table on which, throw after throw, [are] scattered the random dice of death" (149). The dice are thrown by people who never experience warfare, while the men who fight are figured as little more than corpses that serve as international wagers and are eventually disposed of.

With such clear figurations of soldiers as dead bodies, the declaration by one of the Australian soldiers that "[t]he war'll end when everybody is drowned in mud" (94) becomes all the more significant. This sentiment is mirrored in the last chapter of the novel during the

Norman's last living moments after an enemy attack. Howe, attempting to make conversation with and care for the dying soldier, asks if Merrier, Lully, and Dubois survived the attack, to which the blond Norman replies, "Why ask?...Everybody's dead. You're dead aren't you?" (173). Despite Howe's hopeful response ("No, I'm alive, and you. A little courage....We must be cheerful" [174, ellipsis in original]), the novel's final exchange solidifies the likeness of living soldiers to dead bodies. The Norman's stance on the unimportance of each soldier's life is indicative of the mentality that permeates the war as these characters have experienced it.

The significance of these representations of dying and buried soldiers does not limit itself to the implications of positioning a living soldier as a dead man, but extends, also, to the creation and maintenance of international American military cemeteries and the crisis of understanding that this burial practice imposed upon American soldiers fighting in Europe and upon American families grieving for lost soldiers. At the onset of World War I, the United States had a very short history with fighting wars on foreign soil, but that short history initiated the practice of returning the bodies of dead soldiers for burial in the United States. Burying soldiers in international American military cemeteries was a necessity during times of heavy fighting, but when battles waned and the war ended, the United States began to oversee the large-scale disinterment, identification, and return of United States' soldiers' bodies to set right the perceived tragedy of leaving the fallen so far from home. Interestingly, even soldiers who return home alive, like Donald Mahon from Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay*, exhibit the hallmarks of dead bodies.

The Body Returned in *Soldiers' Pay*

The relationship between modernist writing's representations of burial and commemoration and American burial practices after World War I is complicated and tense—especially in the case of *Soldiers' Pay*, wherein the soldier who is returned home for burial is literally alive, but figuratively and socially dead. The anxieties the members of Mahon's hometown feel leading up to his return allow Faulkner to address the anxiety associated with the European influences that the soldiers (living or otherwise) brought back with them when they returned to America, which often included more concrete understandings of foreign politics, reverence for other cultures, and diseases not yet encountered on American soil (among other problematic introductions to American culture), but also included an understanding of foreign burial policy and treatment of the dead. Understanding the role these European influences played in American modernist writing can strengthen our understanding not only of the American World War I novel, but also of the anxieties about decay and loss that permeated American culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Soldiers' Pay's Donald Mahon's return home exemplifies the comfort drawn from American wartime burial and commemorative practices that came from a soldier's body being returned to be buried in American soil, but he also exemplifies the disruption to American culture that this return facilitated. Mahon's presence in his hometown gives Faulkner a way of discussing how Americans dealt with the war dead who had fallen while overseas. Faulkner figures Donald—whom John T. Fredrick describes as “only physically alive” (248)—as a dead man. He arrives in his hometown sick, blind, amnesiac, and listed by his own government as a casualty of war—a combination of conditions that Andrew Scoblionko argues “limit[s] his ability to fashion his own subjectivity” and makes it impossible for him to “situate himself in the

present” or “construct a self in any meaningful way” (64). In addition to these maladies, he also sustained a hideous forehead scar while at war—a visible marker of violence that the war has written on his body, which makes it difficult for his fiancée to reconnect with him. Ostensibly, this scar is his only physical sign of bodily trauma, but his amnesia and his unwillingness to develop and rebuild actual relationships with those around him indicate an injury sustained while at war deeper than those that can be read on his body. These physical and psychological maladies alter his subjectivity in such a way that his social identity is not that of a returned war hero, but that of a returned war *casualty* meant not for reentrance into American society but for burial in American soil.

The likeness between Mahon and a war casualty extends, then, beyond Faulkner’s repeated description of his “cadaverous” state. The reader does not have access to what Mahon experiences for much of the novel; in fact, Mahon shows very limited “recognition of himself and his surroundings” (Fredrick 245) throughout the narrative until the few moments before his death in chapter eight, when he “relives in vivid detail the combat in flight in which he has received the wounds which are now causing his death” (Fredrick 245). For the majority of the novel, “[Mahon] remains...a fragmented subject, at home nowhere, burnt out and insensate” (Scoblionko 64), and the reader must depend on the observations of others, their interactions with him, and their perceptions of his experiences at war in order to piece together what life must be like for this wounded veteran who cannot connect to the people from his past. Donald’s return, though he is a celebrated figure and is revered for his service to his country, disrupts the town and draws direct attention to how the world has changed as a result of the war. This disruption and his unwillingness to interact with those around him lead to his complete separation as a veteran from the civilians and as a modern corpse from the living.

Despite the fact that he acts as the crux by which the novel's "cast of characters...are all connected" (Bennett 52), Donald is further separated from his surroundings and the present moment in that he serves as both a *memento mori* (in that he is a constant reminder of death and wartime atrocities) and a reminder of integrity and moral living for the rest of the town. Michael Millgate writes that Faulkner utilizes the theme of the returned soldier in this novel by positioning Donald as the "wounded Hero figure" and the "moral touchstone by which the community of Charlestown may be judged" (9). Even this characterization speaks to his deathliness and his function as a returned war casualty. Stanley French argues that American cemeteries in the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries began serving as moral touchstones for their visitors. The purpose of American cemeteries shifted during the mid-nineteenth century from a temporary space meant solely for decomposition and disposal to a more permanent "resting place" that served a documentary and story-telling function. As American society began to conceptualize grave markers as *permanent* necessities for commemoration instead of temporary markers that served only to demarcate one grave from another, these markers began to carry the burden of recording and making sense of a sort of collective history. Families in mourning decorated headstones with reminders of morality and patriotism in an effort to glorify the sacrifices of the deceased or commemorate the life he or she had led. Graveyards and cemeteries—particularly those that contained fallen soldiers returned from Europe—had begun doing nationalistic work, showing those who visited them all of the resting places of the people who had died valiantly, honorably, and bravely while serving in battle. Faulkner equates Donald with morality just as French argues the grave of a dead person came to be equated with the reminder of what a moral person should strive to be.

Donald's community believes he is on the verge of dying and describes him as a dead man despite his living presence in his hometown, evidencing further his positioning as a dead-while-living soldier. Even before Donald's father knows of his imminent return, Januarius Jones, a friend of Reverend Mahon, describes Donald as having "death in his face" (63) after looking at a picture of him at eighteen years old before going to war. The insinuation here is that even as a young and healthy boy, long before he sustained his war injuries, Donald carried an air of death in his visage. Donald's father agrees with this analysis of the picture of his son, though he claims that all young people have that air of death in their faces—a comment on the state of America's wartime youth that were plagued by the draft. The impact that war has on a culture, not the impact that war has on the body, positions Donald as a living representation of the war dead and focuses the reader on the impacts that changing deathways had on the nation's collective consciousness. Before Donald makes his way back from war, several characters in the novel comment on the fact that he was listed as a dead soldier and exhibit justified surprise at the idea of his return home alive. A great many characters, therefore, refer to Donald as a dead man when he comes up in conversation. George Farr insists to Cecily that she cannot be engaged, saying of Donald "Why, he's dead" (81), and Robert Saunders responds to his wife after she announces that Donald will be returning by asking, "The government sent his body back, did they?" (93). Perhaps the most powerful description of Donald Mahon's condition is given by Margaret Powers, who says, "[t]he man that was wounded is dead and this is another person" (114). Mrs. Powers refuses to believe that this person is her son, arguing instead that the war has changed him into another individual entirely. He is marked by death—perhaps by the large death tolls of the war in Europe broadcast in American before his enlistment, and perhaps by the death he experienced and inflicted while overseas, but certainly, too, by his own imminent death.

Donald's mere personality or outlook has not changed because of the war; he has *become something else* because of the war, an alchemy that echoes Stephen Prothero's argument that death turns the human body into something completely different from what it was before (1). Of equal importance is the community's treatment of Donald as a dead man. Despite his ability to draw breath, despite the fact that his heart still beats, the fact that his town does not treat him as a living being positions him as a dead man. Perhaps the only holdout is Donald's father. He maintains the belief that his son's health might make a comeback and that he will be restored to the young man he was before serving in Europe. He performs a denial of the seriousness of his son's condition for the other members of the town, which seems to the outside observer to indicate that he believes his son capable of making a recovery. Donald's father is the only character who maintains this attitude, though. The rest of the town has decided that Donald's impending death is unavoidable, and they await his physical death in the wake of some kind of other spiritual death incurred in the war. Finally, however, Mr. Mahon comes to terms with Donald's condition, and begins to repeat to himself, "This was Donald, my son. He is dead" (252), as if trying to prepare himself for his impending loss. Though the town considered Donald dead long before this realization, Reverend Mahon's shift from posed hopefulness to resigned preparation for his son's bodily passing marks an important moment in the novel—when Donald goes from having one person willing to wait out his recovery to the moment when Donald's life is denied completely and his representation shifts from that of a dead-while-living returned soldier to that of a dead soldier brought home for burial.

Much criticism focuses on Donald's place in the novel and the commentary his role makes on the fate of civilization in the face of mechanized warfare, and his funeral illustrates Faulkner's stance on this matter. Upon Donald's actual death, his family buries him in American

soil and carries out all of the trappings of a standard soldier's funeral. His loved ones embark on a procession to the graveyard, the body is interred, a borrowed Boy Scout plays Taps, and Donald's family and friends memorialize him and reflect on his impact on their lives. Emily K. Dalgarno points out that "Donald's death has important personal consequences for all the other characters" (38), and because of this, his death "cannot convincingly be read as the symbol of a declining or fallen civilization" (38), as some critics have argued. Though this argument carries some merit, Dalgarno claims that it ultimately falls apart because of the other characters' relationships with Donald and their intensely personal reactions to his death. Before his death, Donald serves as the connection that holds all other characters in the novel together; despite his death, the characters maintain their connections and continue to interact. Mourning Donald united the characters in this novel, and though the literature of the Great War often utilizes tropes like the loss of innocence, the loss of purpose, and the loss of lasting connections, Donald's funeral can be read a counterpoint to those tropes. His return to the U.S. as a living soldier figured as a dead body, his literal death upon his return, and his interment in American soil position him as a representation of the United States' international interaction. His return brings knowledge of a changing and mechanized world and the hint of othered cultures to his small Southern community. Instead of representing the fall of a society, he represents the shifting—albeit the forced and uncomfortable shifting—of the modern world. His small town in the American South is now constructed not simply around the United States' entrance to the war, but on the global influence the U.S. incurred upon its involvement. Donald has experienced European culture and modernized warfare firsthand, and though he is closed off to the rest of the town and unwilling to communicate his experiences to those around him, he exists there as a spectral representation of the changes the world has sustained on a large scale as a result of the

Great War. The highly publicized nature of the war means that the townspeople would be privy to the violence and the deaths it caused without Donald's return, but his presence serves as the undeniable reminder from which the town cannot look away as they may be able to look away from newspapers or close their ears to radio reports of bombings and casualties. His return to the United States and his funeral among characters compelled to be together because of his influence allow for this uncomfortable but necessary shift to take place.

Though abundant scholarship exists on the importance of death in Faulkner's writing, significantly fewer scholars have taken on the importance of Donald's funeral in this novel. His funeral does allow, as many funeral scenes do, for the characters to reflect on his importance in their lives and creates a moment for all citizens of the town to examine the effects of war as his procession moves through the town toward the graveyard. For example, Faulkner gives the reader a very short but poignant exchange between Loosh and a townspeople in which the townspeople muses, "[W]e all gwine dat way, some day. All roads leads to de graveyard" (292). In short, Donald's funeral may be the most normative funeral scene in all of Faulkner's writing. The scene features relevant details for a funeral during this period—such as flowers, memorializing music, and a procession to the gravesite—and it provides analysis of death's natural progression, the human necessity for commemoration, and the importance of mourning in the face of loss. Faulkner's fiction is often concerned with death and burial (*As I Lay Dying* is an obvious example, as is Red's funeral scene in *Sanctuary*, both of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters). While these novels take on accurate details of funerary practices specific to time period and geographic location, rarely do they live up to a reader's expectations for a funeral procession and reflections from loved ones on the importance of the deceased's presence in their lives. These other novels are peppered with corpses rolling out of disturbed coffins

(*Sanctuary*), unembalmed loved ones decaying during a lengthy procession to a graveyard several towns away (*As I Lay Dying*), self-immolation and forced cremation (*Absalom, Absalom!*), and other disturbing interruptions of end-of-life care. Donald's actual funeral can exist within the Faulknerian canon of funerary scenes because his actual procession to the graveyard starts long before his physical death. His persistence in *living* in the face of his spiritual death—or perceived death or mental death or any number of other ways that Donald's deathlike nature could be described—is disruption enough to point out that burial practices in modern American literature allow authors to examine cultural changes by way of the disruption of everyday events or common expectations.

Faulkner sets the reader up for much rumination on the meaning of death and the symbolism of death, particularly death's relationship to sex, when he opens the chapter that describes Donald's funeral by writing "Sex and death: the front door and the back door of the world" (291). While Donald's prolonged act of dying allows him to make it home in time to be buried in standard form for his time and place, the mechanics of Faulkner's writing position Donald's funeral scene alongside the other disrupted funeral scenes in Faulkner's canon. The chapter starts with the words "Sex and death," which introduce a short rumination on the relationship between the act that creates life and the event that draws it to a close. Following that paragraph are alternating scenes of Donald's funeral (tied explicitly to death, of course) and Januarius Jones's attempted seduction of the Mahons' servant, Emmy. The funeral seems as if it would be the primary focus of part one of this chapter. Faulkner takes up a considerable amount of space to describe the funeral of this major character while giving Jones's sex-driven plotting very brief and short narrations. He places the description of the funeral, however, in parentheses as if to say that the funeral procession was at best a necessary background performance to the

intended dalliance between Jones and Emmy. If sex is the act from which life is created, and death is the act (performance) by which life is ended, this scene values the potential to create life over the ability to snuff it out.

Emmy's own ruminations on Donald's funeral indicate that she finds it completely unnecessary, even for the task immediately at hand of burying Donald, but it is likely that he also saw his death as an unnecessary performance. As his family and loved ones carry Donald's body out of the house and begin the procession, Emmy covers her ears to block out the sounds, but can still hear

those horrible, blundering, utterly unnecessary sounds: the hushed scraping of timid footsteps, the muted thumping of wood against wood, that passing, left behind an unbearable unchastity of stale flowers—as though flowers themselves getting a rumor of death became corrupt—all the excruciating ceremony for disposing of human carrion. (292)

Donald returned to the town a dead man. His body did not need to stop working in order for his death to be a reality for Emmy. As such, the funeral seems an unnecessary performance to mourn an unnecessary performance. Despite her strong feelings for Donald, she reacts to his passing by imagining him as “human carrion” and telling Mrs. Mahon that she will not attend the funeral: “You got him killed: now bury him yourself” (292). Given the choice, Emmy would have had Donald stay in town instead of going off to war. In Emmy's view, Donald's mother allowed him to go to war and revered him for it, and in so doing, she carries as much responsibility for his death as the war itself. When seeking something or someone to blame for Donald's death, however, no one person *can* be blamed. He was not killed by his plane crash, no bullet from a specific gun pierced his body, and he did not sustain injuries from some other weapon operated

by a single soldier. The war took his life. Without someone to blame, Emmy can look back through Donald's progression towards warfare until she finds someone on whom she can pin some responsibility, just as the section that describes his funeral looks back through the procession of his life and cites "sex and death" as the two bookends to a person's existence. Emmy feels the need to bookend Donald's descent into lifelessness, and she does so by pinpointing warfare itself, not one single violent action of war, as that which caused his death.

The section describing Donald's funeral does more than just bookend a person's existence with sex and death, though; it also focuses on the implications these bookends hold for a person's bodily functions in relation to that person's actual life, suggesting again that living flesh and a living person are not equivalent. The section continues to alternate scenes from the funeral with scenes of Emmy and Jones alone in the Mahon house until Jones leads Emmy to her room and the Boy Scout plays Taps at the graveside. Though the reflections on the importance and symbolism of death in this novel are vast, the significance of Donald's funeral itself must not be overlooked. Faulkner juxtaposes sex and death in poignant ways here—not simply in his initial paragraph, in which he reflects that in many cases they serve the symmetrical purposes of "lift[ing] us out of the flesh" when we're young and "reduc[ing] us again to the flesh" when we're old (291). The parenthetical scenes of this section, then, contradict the initial reflection Faulkner offers the reader. Sex and death do not just "reduce us again to the flesh in our old age." They "reduce us again to the flesh" when we are young, virile, and positioned as members of a lost generation devastated by modern warfare.

The spaces that Donald's body inhabits—his living-while-dead body and his literally dead body—play a determining role in how we are to read this character. Before Donald dies, he occupies a liminal space in that he is technically alive, but essentially he stopped living long

before he returned home. His flesh lives but *he*—as a person—does not. His return home before his death and his burial in American soil, however, tie him to important trends in American burial practices as they shift in response to international cooperation. His liminality, however, persists. The novel treats his interment in American soil as a parenthetical note, an aside to the rest of the action. Donald does not, as Dalgarno points out, represent the complete ruin of a society. Instead, he acts as a conduit for changing culture, and his funeral—though it exists in the background of the action—allows the rest of the novel to exist. Without Donald, these characters have little connection to each other, and without his death and funeral, the novel has no crux, the characters no source of reflection and rumination. Donald’s physical death that—finally—follows his emotional or symbolic death precipitates a crucial turning point in the novel. Donald can be buried, mourned, and commemorated as a thing of the past, and the other characters can move on with their lives, trying to progress after the weighty impact of World War I. The part of the novel that comes before the burial illustrates the weight of the Great War while the part that comes after illustrates the urge to move on, adapt through burial, and normalize after national tragedy. In this sense, the “pay” a soldier receives from the government (as referenced in the title) can be read as the funeral he is given after he has passed away (though the logistics of offering this kind of pay are more complicated than simply writing a check for the funeral expenses.)

The question of how to handle soldiers' bodies during and after World War I was a complicated one for the U.S. government, and the practice of sending the soldiers home for burial ultimately prevailed despite the complications it entails. Donald’s relationship to this custom illustrates those complications, both in terms of the expense and organization of transporting the body and in the cultural shifting that often results not just from encountering a

dead body but also from encountering a body that carries the tinge of liminality. In Donald's case, his is the body that is not quite dead but not quite alive anymore, not quite civilian but not quite soldier anymore, yet still visibly changed by his experience in war. His body cannot communicate that change to those minimally affected by the war in Europe. The permeating inability to communicate—to connect with those outside himself—allows his scarred body to partition off his selfhood from those around him. In a sense, his body serves the purpose of spreading the effects of the war into more remote areas of the United States, just as the implementation of other forms of mourning and commemoration—like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—served the purpose of signaling the *intentions* of the war (economic gain, international alliances, etc.) to the citizens of the United States, utilizing the soldier's body for political purposes rather than solely for the purpose of national healing in the wake of mass tragedy.

1919 and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

In addition to the overwhelming presence of soldiers being figured as dead bodies or as fodder for warfare in post-World War I literature, authors like John Dos Passos also chose to examine the steps taken by many countries towards commemorating the fallen soldiers throughout the conflict. The hastily built cemeteries mentioned in the previous section served in this capacity on a small scale, but the largest international movement towards commemorating the fallen was the creation of Unknown Soldier memorials in major countries involved in World War I. Laura Wittman calls this memorial trend “a quintessentially modern confrontation with death” (7) because of its flexibility in meaning (being both “bellicist and pacifist” in interpretation) and its ability to be recycled for every major military conflict in which the nation

subsequently engages. In presenting this argument, Wittman points out the influence of modernity brought about—or perhaps solidified—by worldwide warfare. This kind of memorial was an invention of the Italians, the French, and the British, and it created a trend that then spread to countries like the United States and Germany.

The anonymity of the Unknown Soldier, the “communicable meaning” of his interment, and the arguable dehumanization that results from his burial color the final section of Dos Passos’s *1919*. The novel comes second in the *U.S.A.* trilogy, and focuses on the importance of the second decade of the twentieth century in the development of the modern United States. The text culminates not in the end of the First World War, but with a fragmented section that addresses the return of the body of the Unknown Soldier. This section, entitled “The Body of an American,” centers around and seeks to explain the establishment of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as well as his transportation and reinterment. This section begins with a stream-of-consciousness rendition of President Warren Harding’s proclamation that America should observe two minutes of silence and fly the American flag at half-mast on Armistice Day in 1921 to honor the dead of World War I and to commemorate the Unknown Soldier who would be interred that day (“Harding”). Dos Passos’s choice to open this section with this proclamation provides his readers with the national tone after World War I ended, and suggests that the President found it necessary to offer some kind of nationwide mourning ceremony for those who lost loved ones during the war. Dos Passos’s decision to present the proclamation in stream-of-consciousness-style language—“Whereasthe Congressoftheunitedstates byaconcurrentresolutionadoptedon the4thdayofmarch” (375, all spacing meant to portray the original text) instead of “Whereas the Congress of the United States, by a concurrent resolution adopted on the 4th day of March”—taken alongside the above information about America’s

reaction to British and French interment ceremonies for their Unknown Soldiers and their motivation to follow suit—suggests hurried motivation and a rush to follow the example set by British and French government-sanctioned mourning.

This is not the only document Dos Passos utilizes to build the mourning tone in this section that mirrors the atmosphere of mourning that colored America immediately following the war. He also utilizes the address given by President Harding at the interment ceremony for the Unknown Soldier, but this language is presented in standard American English with proper punctuation, spacing, spelling, mechanics, etc, though Dos Passos only includes excerpts from President Harding’s address. He includes the first few lines of the address—“We are met today to pay the impersonal tribute; the name of him whose body lies before us took flight with his imperishable soul” (377)—and then skips to a moment much farther into the address when Harding said, “as a typical soldier of this representative democracy he fought and died believing in the indisputable justice of his country’s cause” (377). The idea that this soldier *necessarily* died “believing in the indisputable justice of his country’s cause” is a stance that Dos Passos’s other writing on World War I (specifically *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*) suggests that the author himself does not support. This soldier’s anonymity makes it impossible for us to know if he actually believed in America’s cause or if he was, like Martin Howe, fighting for the defense of European worldviews (which were focused more on international relations and economic practices based in Socialism, etc.) for which he felt more respect than he felt for those he had encountered in America.

The anonymity of the Unknown Soldier that Dos Passos frames in this section mirrors the anonymity that President Harding illustrated in his address at the interment. Early in his address he acknowledges that we cannot “know his station in life, because from every station came the

five millions” (“President”). Before this acknowledgement, he describes the Unknown Soldier in anonymous terms, saying, “He might have come from any one of millions of American homes.... He may have been a native or an adopted son; that matters little because they glorified the same loyalty, they sacrificed alike” (“President”). Harding figured this soldier as an anonymous sacrifice for the cause for which the United States fought, and he uses this anonymity to bolster the soldier's passing as a sacrifice made in the name of nationality. Laura Wittman argues that anonymity and sacrificial language are important characteristics of the Unknown Soldier memorial in all combatant nations. As mentioned above, Wittman claims that the Unknown Soldier's anonymity was that which allowed for his symbolism, but also “a shocking acknowledgement of modern warfare's unprecedented reduction of the individual to an expendable cog in the machine” (9). Harding certainly did not intend for the Unknown Soldier to be viewed as “an expendable cog in the machine,” but as war strips individuality and identity from a soldier in the name of national security, that soldier's reduction to something cog-like is impossible to avoid. Veteran burial intends to return individuality to the soldier by focusing on his life before the war, saluting him for his service and sacrifice during battle, wrapping the casket in the American flag, and marking the gravesite with his name and service details. Harding spoke of the soldier in his address, saying, “[h]e died for his country, and greater devotion hath no man than this. He died unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in his heart and hope on his lips, that his country should triumph and his civilization survive. As a typical soldier of this representative democracy, he fought and died, believing in the indisputable justice of his countries [sic] cause” (“President”). By speaking of the soldier's bravery and intentions, he aims to address something individualistic and important about his character. However, Harding's

inability to name the soldier and the fact that no one can know if the soldier actually believed the things Harding ascribes to him, solidifies his anonymity—the very quality that allows him to serve a cog-like function in the machine of war.

Dos Passos utilizes the anonymity of the Unknown Soldier as an indecipherable symbol for all of the American war dead. Dos Passos's use of anonymity is more of a conglomerate anonymity wherein the Unknown Soldier that Dos Passos describes is clearly many different soldiers who came together under the title of the Unknown Soldier. He calls the Unknown Soldier "John Doe" and clearly conceptualizes this figure as a single being. However, instead of attributing the *possibility* of multiple backgrounds to this soldier (as President Harding did in his address), he writes several histories into his background as if all of these possibilities came together to create this soldier's conglomerate background. For example, he writes that the Unknown Soldier was "born and raised in Brooklyn, in Memphis, near the lakefront in Cleveland, Ohio, in the stench of the stockyards in Chi, on Beacon Hill, in an old brick house in Alexandria Virginia, on Telegraph Hill..." and speaks to his socioeconomic status by claiming that he was raised "across the railroad tracks, out near the country club, in a shack cabin tenement apartmenthouse [sic] exclusive residential suburb" (376). Further, he writes of his career, saying that he "worked for an exterminating company in Union City, filled pipes in an opium joint in Trenton, N.J. Y.M.C.A secretary, express agent, truckdriver, fordmechanic, sold books in Denver Colorado" (377). The anonymously interred soldier is not physically made up of the body parts of several different soldiers; he is, instead, a nameless composite of all of the soldiers from diversified backgrounds who will never be identified and buried in American soil. Despite burial's intention of returning individuality to a soldier, this unidentified soldier,

specifically because of his anonymity, is meant to offer closure to a diverse and widely spread population of homes now missing the men sent off to war.

Dos Passos carries this anonymity into his discussion of “John Doe” going into the Army, but does so in terms of the anonymity that the army imposes on its soldiers. Of “John Doe” he writes, “Naked *he* went into the army” (377, emphasis added), but shifts to the second person to describe his pre-enlistment physical, saying “they weighed you, measured you, looked for flat feet, squeezed your penis to see if you had clap, looked up your anus to see if you had piles, counted your teeth, made you cough, listened to your heart and lungs, made you read the letters on the card, charted your urine and your intelligence...” (377). “John Doe” forfeited his individuality upon his entrance into the army, but Dos Passos furthers this discussion of his anonymity when he engages in speculation as to how the soldier became unidentifiable. On one of the few occasions that Dos Passos gives this soldier a voice, the soldier says “I lost my identification tag swimmin in the Marne” (378), a statement that provides a concrete explanation for his complete lack of identity after death, but one that also signifies *immersion* in World War I and the massive death toll accrued at the Battle of the Marne. Dos Passos positions “John Doe” as a man stripped of his identity as soon as he became immersed in the Marne—the site of the battle that takes his life.

At the end of this section, Dos Passos recounts the transportation of the Unknown Soldier from France to the United States and the progression of his burial ceremony in fairly accurate, although exceptionally brief, detail. Just as he utilizes the imagery from Harding’s address when he describes the personal history of the Unknown Soldier, he accurately represents the burial ceremony and the military funeral honors bestowed upon the body as they actually played out on Armistice Day in 1921. He includes the selection of the Unknown Soldier, his

being laid to rest in the pine coffin, his trip home on a battleship, and his interment in the sarcophagus in the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery. He includes the imagery of draping the American flag over the coffin, the bugler playing taps, President Harding leading the crowd in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, and the act of awarding the Unknown Soldier various awards of bravery and valor, including American, French, Belgian, Italian, Rumanian, Polish, and Native American awards and commemorative tokens (379-80). All of these things suggest a return of individuality to the nameless, unidentifiable soldier, but exist as mere performance because the soldier's death is irreversible and his identity unrecoverable.

The motivation behind a memorial like the Memorial Amphitheater differs greatly from that of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, however. The Memorial Amphitheater was originally meant solely for memorialization of the war dead rather than interment of an unknown soldier. The sarcophagus for the Unknown Soldier was not built until later when the Unknown Soldier tombs in Europe became so popular that America decided to follow suit. Neil Hanson argues that the implementation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in combatant nations was necessary from a commemorative standpoint because

[t]he grieving families of [fallen soldiers] were robbed even of the consolation of a funeral and a grave-site, and for them the grave of the Unknown Warrior...became the tomb and tombstone of their lost loved ones. In almost every other combatant nation an unknown soldier was also buried at some national shrine and, just as in Britain, each at once became the focus of a pilgrimage that continues to this day. (xv-xvi)

Hanson illustrates here that the practice of actually interring an unidentified body serves a different purpose—a grave to visit, a site at which to mourn the dead—than the commemoration-

based purpose of Amphitheater. The U.S.'s motivation for adding the Tomb to the Amphitheater was in line with Britain's motivation; politicians "hoped that by creating monuments and rituals commemorating the military victory, they might help to heal, or at least 'camouflage,' the social divisions caused by the war.... The Unknown Soldier, it was hoped, would both validate the war and provide just such a unifying symbol" (412). Laura Wittman argues, though, that the monument's celebration of anonymity was the more significant element of its symbolism and that the tombs act as a reminder of the expendability of soldiers. She does not argue, however, that the Unknown Soldier memorials are pacifist memorials, but that they "sought to commemorate the psychological and social conflict of veterans, and of a culture that rejected mass death as incomprehensible and dehumanizing yet needed desperately to feel that so many had not died in vain, that suffering and death could still have a common, communicable meaning" (9). A memorial structure can speak to this kind of meaning, but a tomb containing the body of an unidentified soldier carries with it something more substantial. This kind of structure holds a tangible sacrifice within it, and the tangibility adds a weight to a fallen soldier's commemoration that a memorial structure does not.

The last two sentences of this section, which read, "All the Washingtonians brought flowers. Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies" (380), not only conclude the novel with images of mourning and commemoration, but these two sentences also juxtapose imagery of American burial practices with European symbols of mourning. Dos Passos utilizes language and mechanics in the last few paragraphs of this section that is hurried and somewhat disjointed. He creates long, rambling lists, he breaks for new "paragraphs" that are less than a full sentence long, and he begins these "paragraphs" with the word "and" (using the lower case "a" at the beginning of the word). A good sampling of this rushed language comes when he describes the

mourners at the ceremony who “thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God’s Country it was to have the bugler play taps and the three volleys made their ears ring” (379). This rushed and hectic tone subsides in the penultimate sentence when Dos Passos writes, in standard American English, “All the Washingtonians brought flowers” (380). The succinct, direct nature of this sentence contrasts with the frantic language leading up to it while also representing a standard American mourning practice—that of bringing flowers to a funeral. The reference to the poppies ties the U.S. to European tradition since the poppy—a flower which grows well in disturbed earth—was widely associated with the war dead in British literature responding to World War I. Dos Passos utilizes the poppy’s association with burial and remembrance practices here, but he utilizes this association as a distinctly *European* practice that solidifies the United States’ entrance into international politics. In other words, Woodrow Wilson bearing a bouquet of poppies is indicative of the fusion of international burial practices into the development of those of the United States.

Though the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was not a distinctly American invention, it stands as an important symbol of shifting American deathways in the wake of World War I. The memorial was created to commemorate each lost or fallen soldier who went unfound or unidentified, but in doing so, it combines these lost or fallen soldiers into one amalgamated being stripped of individuality and devoid of distinctive motivations for enlisting, going to war, and fighting in Europe. As Dos Passos has pointed out in this final section of *1919*, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier does not return individuality to the soldier buried within it or to the thousands of unidentified soldiers this body represents. Instead, the monument combines all unidentified soldiers into one composite being with many possible backgrounds, many possible motivations,

and many possible relationships to government and warfare, but who are nevertheless used as tools for political posturing and justifications for a bloody and devastating war effort.

Studies of the Great War often marginalize the American dead since the American death toll was so much lower than that of other combatant nations. Furthermore, even though World War I is often heralded as a major catalyst for the modernist period, studies of deathways often marginalize the importance of World War I in comparison to the importance of the Civil War and World War II. John Dos Passos's *1919* and *One Man's Initiation: 1917* as well as William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* illustrate clearly the oft-noted impact that World War I had on American literature—the loss of faith in American ideals and the crisis of understanding that resulted from a highly mechanized, highly technological war effort. American writers often reflect on the idea that this generation turned to Europe with reverence, looking for leadership, ideas, and guidance. The impact that this impulse had on American life was significant, and the impact on burial and commemorative practices and policies—including the maintenance of international American military cemeteries, the practice of returning bodies to the United States for burial, and the implementation of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—was likewise vast. More importantly, however, the impact that this cultural shift had on American fiction writers during the interwar period affected their literary responses to this period as they attempted to respond to this crisis in mourning related to commemorative and memorial practices.

Despite such a crisis, World War I also marked a formative moment in American deathways precisely because it brought the general population into contact with death in ways unprecedented since the Civil War years. Faulkner's novel juxtaposes the reactions of people

relatively removed from actual warfare and the soldiers who witnessed the atrocities of war firsthand. In doing so, it allows an examination of how death tolls, increased as a result of warfare, have varying impacts on different groups of observers. The general United States population may have heard about the bombings, gassings, and casualty reports on the radio, and they may have read about these events in newspapers and magazines, but reality of those effects is vague until they are tangibly present for an observer. Faulkner utilizes the unavoidable presence of a soldier physically and/or emotionally marked by the war to bring the general population into contact with the reality of war and to show what happens when the war dead return—even if by all physical accounts they appear to be living—bringing with them all of the effects of war. Dos Passos's novels, on the other hand, struggle to illuminate the falsities of the motivation for warfare. *1919* and *One Man's Initiation: 1917* demonstrate the economic drive and the political posturing required for sending soldiers to death and show soldiers engaging with these realities on and off the battlefield.

As the following chapter will show, however, the increased contact with death brought about by any war effort also brings those touched by the effects of warfare closer to the reality of death and its impact on the human body. Just as fiction writers responded to the atrocities of war and the crisis in mourning that those atrocities shaped, writers also responded to the crisis in understanding death that followed as a result of a prolonged era of separation between the living and the dead followed by an era unable to look away from the reality of death. Such a clash results in a permeating and intense collective desire to avoid coming into contact with death. Avoiding burial, however, does not eliminate its necessity. When a movement from taking care of burial individually or as a family shifted to allow a few individuals to take on the undesirable job of handling the dead in exchange for money, an industry solidified.

Chapter 2

Commodified Bodies:

William Faulkner and Willa Cather in the Age of the Funeral Industry

In those days, Claude had a sharp physical fear of death. A funeral, the sight of a neighbor lying rigid in his black coffin, overwhelmed him with terror. He used to lie awake in the dark, plotting against death, trying to devise some plan of escaping it....Was there no way out of the world but this? When he thought of the millions of lonely creatures rotting away under ground, life seemed nothing but a trap that caught people for one horrible end. There had never been a man so strong or so good that he had escaped. And yet he sometimes felt sure that he, Claude Wheeler, would escape; that he would actually invent some clever shift to save himself from dissolution.

- Willa Cather, *One of Ours*

In the first section of Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, during the days when Claude Wheeler "had a sharp physical fear of death" and when "a funeral, the sight of a neighbor lying rigid in his black coffin, overwhelmed him with terror" (43), the members of the Wheeler household wake up to find that Lovely Creek has been hit with a heavy snowstorm and the roof of the hog-house has caved in during the night under the weight of the snow. Claude works to dislodge the hogs from the snow and finds that a few have survived, but twelve hogs have suffocated under the weight. Mahailey, the Wheelers' cook and housemaid, immediately suggests that Claude get to work butchering the hogs to salvage the meat, but Claude responds "indignantly" that he "wouldn't butcher them if [he] never saw meat again" and declares "I don't know what I will do with them, but I'm mighty sure I won't butcher them" (83).

This scene is baffling. Claude lives and works on a farm and his family's financial stability depends on the land and on raising animals for food and money; however, he is not willing to recoup the lost money by butchering the hogs. In fact, in relation to "the loss in money, about which even his mother was grieved, he didn't seem to care" (84). We are told that Claude "was humiliated at losing the pigs because they had been left in his charge" (84), but his refusal to butcher the animals and his confusion over what he will end up doing with them extends beyond humiliation. Claude's "sharp physical fear of death" and his "terror" at funerals result in part from the rise of the modern funeral industry that separates humanity from the phenomenon of death so much that death becomes frightening and impossible to comprehend.

Just as Cather's novel can be read as an exploration of the effects of a modernized funeral industry on an individual's relationship with death, William Faulkner also explores differently modernized groups of people in his texts by illustrating their relationships with and reactions to dying. When *As I Lay Dying*'s Vardaman, who has also lived on a farm all of his life, asks if his mother is going to go to the same place where "all those rabbits and possums" (66) went, he is exhibiting a closeness to death that necessitates a different relationship with dying than that exhibited in *Sanctuary* where the dead are mourned at elaborately orchestrated funerals and the appearance of dead bodies creates a sense of shock rather than mere confusion. Generally, Claude Wheeler's life as a farmer would indicate that he is more comfortable with death because of his closeness to the natural processes of life and of dying, as is the case for the Bundren family. Both families live close to the earth, see animals die in the texts, and have to engage with the reality of death. However, whereas Vardaman tries to understand his mother's death by comparing it to the many animals he has seen die, Claude finds himself unable to butcher—or even bury—the hogs that died in the snowstorm.

The difference lies in a character's financial ability to engage with the funeral industry. The Bundrens, though they own their land, are not a rich family with a lot of disposable income. The Wheelers, however, are financially stable enough to expand their land ownership regularly, to employ a maid and a farmhand, and to take regular trips to town to buy supplies and seek entertainment. (They would not have to use their mother's death as an excuse to buy a gramophone, a banana, new teeth, etc. as the Bundrens do.) The Wheelers' socioeconomic status gives them access to the funeral industry, access that would impact one's understanding of and discomfort with the decay of a dead body. In the same trajectory, Red's funeral in *Sanctuary* reads in a much more sensationalistic way than the scenes of death and burial discussed above. Faulkner characterizes Red's funeral as one thoroughly impacted by the funeral industry, complete with flowers, an expensive coffin, an embalmed body, an elaborate funeral repast, and a jazz funeral-like procession to the graveyard. Novels like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary* and Willa Cather's *One of Ours* illustrate a progression of the commodification of death and the rise of the death industry. By doing so, they ask readers to reconsider rural spaces of modernity that modernize differently than more urban areas, and the spectacle of the dead body as the dead are separated from the living through modern practices like embalming and the rise of the funeral home.

Death acts as a source of sensationalistic shock for various characters in these works, but the results of their face-to-face encounters with it are markedly different depending on the characters' place in the process of modernization and their resulting proximity to death. The abundance of work available on the representations and significance of death in Faulkner's

work⁹ and Cather's work¹⁰ suggests that the corpse plays an important role in our understanding of these texts. This chapter illustrates that the corpse itself may be important, and that importance may be marked by sensationalism, but the study of literary representations of burial in the age of the modern funeral industry carries important weight, too. By representing varied access to the funeral industry in differently modernized areas, these authors' uses of corpses do not simply signify changes and disparities in the modern world. They also draw the reader's attention to the living's strained relationship with the dead that results from sanitizing and disciplining burial, and the overtly sensationalized corpse that arises from the living being unaccustomed to encounters with the world of the dead.

***As I Lay Dying* and Differently Modernizing Groups**

The Bundrens in *As I Lay Dying* represent rural, working-class groups without ready access to the services of the funeral industry. They are not as bothered by Addie's dead and decomposing body as a twenty-first century audience or a twentieth-century highbrow readership would expect them to be, nor are they as bothered as the more urban characters they encounter. Though they give much attention to the smell of her decomposing body during the journey, they do not hesitate to construct the casket themselves or to carry her body with them in their wagon to her burial site. In fact, Anse prolongs the trip (seemingly unnecessarily) by refusing to use Tull's wagon or team of horses to take the body to Jefferson, saying, "We'll take ourn.... She'll want it so" (92). The family holds a funeral driven by their folk practices. The Bundrens and their guests dress in their Sunday clothes, the women sit inside the home talking in low,

⁹ For examples, see Bielawski, Cartwright, Gidley, Gray, Hamblin, Hardin, Kaczmarek, Moore, Schwab, and Slankard, among others.

¹⁰ For examples, see Burke, Doane, Friedman, Lucenti, Middleton, and Ronning, among others.

respectful voices that sound “kind of like bees murmuring in a water bucket” (87) while the men gather outside to discuss the family’s loss. Tull takes notice of Cash’s workmanship in building the coffin (a common element of folk burial), noting that he “made it clock shape...with every joint and seam beveled and scrubbed with the plane, tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket” (88). The Bundrens leave the casket open so that the mourners can view the body, and have “laid her head to foot in it so the [wedding] dress could spread out” (88). When all of the guests have arrived, the women sing hymns in remembrance of Addie, and Reverend Whitfield performs a religious sermon. Though several elements of Addie’s funeral smack of modern funeral practices, such as the perfection with which the coffin was designed (despite the fact that Cash made it by hand) and the mourners’ insistence that the Bundrens bury the body as soon as possible in order to maintain Addie’s dignity, the family does not succeed in carrying out modern burial practices efficiently or effectively.

The Bundrens are less concerned with following the timelines for burial set by the expectations of the modern funeral industry than with fulfilling the expectations associated with their folkways as they relate to commemorating the dead and accommodating the stubbornness Addie displayed during her lifetime. Anse’s use of the unconditional future tense when describing the fact that Addie *will* want it so (instead of saying that Addie *would* want it so) reveals a connection to her personality and her body unchanged by her death. In other words, the Bundrens are not so separated from death by the distance the modern funeral places between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The family personifies Addie's corpse in the process of commemorating her passing—a tendency that creates a sense of intimacy between the living and the memory of the dead, not the living and the dead body itself. The distance placed

between living bodies and dead bodies by modern burial practices made this inclination prevalent.

The Bundrens, then, are impacted by modern funeral practices, but not as thoroughly by the modern funeral *industry*. For this reason, the emotions surrounding Addie's death preoccupy the internality of the Bundren characters, so much so that they cannot work through the physical problem of her death (namely, the body she has left behind). The Bundrens' lack of interaction with the funeral industry does not mean that they do not mourn, nor does it mean that they are able to make peace with Addie's passing immediately. Each character spends a great deal of time reflecting on her passing as they grieve and work through their loss. The funeral industry ultimately commodified the body, made funerals and burial elaborately expensive, and sanitized the experience of dealing with a dead body to the point that the living who worked outside of the funeral industry no longer had to encounter human corpses. This does not mean that the world pre-funeral industry (when contact with the dead was more common and more easily understood) was devoid of emotion when dealing with human loss. Grief and mourning were still prevalent, as we see in *As I Lay Dying*, but the physical problem of death—the corpse that is left behind—was easier to understand and did not produce as much anxiety before the sanitizing practices of this period.

Further, the Bundrens' separation from the industry allows them to utilize their folk traditions in such a way that Addie's funeral rites end up reflecting, while also distorting, the modern funeral industry without ever engaging in markedly modern practices like embalming and beautifying the corpse. Though the modern funeral industry's use of embalming allows the funeral to take place long after death, there is an urgency to get the body in the ground within about a week so the dignity afforded to the body by the beautification process does not have time

to wear off. That is of little concern to the Bundrens, however, since embalmmment and beautification are not part of their particular burial ritual (besides the folk tradition of burying women in their wedding dresses, which the Bundrens do follow). Further, the Bundrens take the long trip to the cemetery that embalmmment would have allowed, but they do so without actually embalming Addie's body. In their rural setting, such practices are tolerable; however, as they move towards a more urban setting, the discontinuities of their practices become intolerable for those around them.

As the Bundrens move away from their rural farm and into the more urban setting of the town, the people they encounter become increasingly bothered by their excursion and cargo. We see this progression in Samson and Rachel's reactions that vary drastically from the thought processes of the Bundrens and in the reactions of the people in Jefferson, who are more troubled still. In light of Mitford's study of funereal practices, it stands to reason that the Bundrens and their surrounding neighbors engage in the kind of funereal practices that they do because of their socioeconomic resources and their separation from the urban spaces where the funeral industry emerges. The Bundrens do not even consider embalmmment; they must carry Addie to the burial plot themselves, and as multiple critics, including Donald Kartiganer, have pointed out, "Addie's coffin is made at home rather than purchased" ("By It" 432). This rejection of—or inability to participate in—the public marketplace highlights the Bundrens' lack of disposable income. Anse may own his land and home—a quality that Kartiganer further argues "puts him in a category of less than 30 percent of the farm populations of 1930s Mississippi" (432)¹¹—but even so, the Bundrens choose not to engage with the funeral industry. Perhaps this decision owes to the fact

¹¹ Kartiganer cites the following source for this information: Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Mississippi: The WPA Guide to the Magnolia State* (1938 Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1988).

that they were not wealthy enough, or perhaps it's because they were not positioned centrally in a town or city. In order to engage fully in the funeral industry, the family would need to meet these conditions. Cash building Addie's coffin also serves to position the Bundrens as representations of a rural South that had not yet been impacted by the funeral industry as thoroughly as other areas of the country.¹² This trend of seeing slower change in burial practices in the rural South was common long before the Bundrens' time. Stanley French writes of Southern burial practices in the early 1800s that "[t]he conditions of burial grounds in the South [were] frequently worse [than in the North] because the decentralization of the population had, except in the few more settled areas, led to a general replacement of community burial grounds by individual family plots on private land" (72). In other words, the funeral industry impacted areas that were more densely populated and communities and groups that were more financially capable of paying for such services (as in the northern states) earlier than it impacted the sparse populations and poor economic climate of the rural U.S. South. This trend extended into the 1920s when the Bundrens make their trip to Jefferson.¹³ The Bundrens, however, do not bury Addie in an individual plot on private family land—another way in which their burial choices do not exactly follow their traditional folkways but still cannot be said to be modern. The Bundrens represent a demographic experiencing modernism in a rural space and thus experiencing modernizing forces differently than those occupying an urban or suburban space where the

¹² Though this does not place the Bundrens within the commonly held perceptions of urban-based modernity, it certainly positions them within a rural population that modernized differently than populations in more urban or suburban areas.

¹³ In some places, this trend extends to contemporary times, with some rural communities in the United States in the twenty-first century practicing home burial and rejecting the impact of the modern funeral industry to the best of their ability while staying in compliance with laws that reflect the impact of the funeral industries' impact on burial and commemoration.

population would have been denser. Their practices mirror and distort the modern practices by attempting to utilize a few elements of modern burial—such as bringing the body to an established burial ground.

The Bundrens, of course, do feel modernizing forces acting upon them. As John T. Matthews points out, the Bundrens have a “keen appetite for products delivered by an increasingly sophisticated technology and market: cheap false teeth, exotic bananas, electric toys, mechanically reproduced music, even culturally produced popular knowledge, like animal magnetism” (“Machine Age” 87), but interestingly they do not seem to desire the “products” of the funeral industry. Their interest in these markers of modernity grows significantly as they travel away from rural spaces and into more urban spaces where they are acted upon by modernizing forces and by the widespread effects of commercialization that such forces bring about. This perhaps explains the fact that while the family still occupies a rural space they engage in folkways related to burial—like building Addie’s coffin by hand—but as they enter the space of the town, Vardaman becomes increasingly more focused on having a banana,¹⁴ Anse takes the visit to town as an opportunity to purchase false teeth and a gramophone, and Dewey Dell sees the excursion as a chance to obtain abortive medicines. The building of the coffin and the transportation of the body indicate that the Bundrens engage in the same practices that Mitford points out were practiced by families before the rise of the funeral industry. The visit to town, however, points to a quickly modernizing world into which Faulkner’s characters are flung because of Addie’s death—making death itself a strong modernizing force for the Bundren family. Addie’s death pulls the Bundrens into an urban space whose modernization outpaces the

¹⁴ See Vardaman’s focus on the banana as a reminder of the markedly modern traits of this society since bananas are exotic fruits that cannot be grown on their farm but can only be obtained in a marketplace that has access to transatlantic trade.

rural area in which they live. Without the impetus to bury Addie in Jefferson, this trip would not take place. Though modernization does impact rural areas (in terms of agricultural advances, machinery, etc.), its impact on rural areas is different from its impact in urban areas. The Bundrens' rootedness in the rural landscape keeps them mostly separate from, and in many ways unable to engage fully in, the funeral industry, but it does not keep them from being aware of the changes taking place in burial trends in the urban areas around them. Their trip to Jefferson allows them to mimic certain elements of the funeral industry with their folkway-driven funeral and trip to bury Addie's body, and it allows them to engage in the various other elements of modernization mentioned above.

Many critics have noted that modernization in its many forms drives the action of the novel,¹⁵ so specific attention should be given to the modernization of burial that drives the action of the novel. Addie's death and her body's need for burial, however, bring them to this modernized space. Death—and more specifically, burial—play key roles in this novel from the moment that Jewel and Darl walk out of the fields in the first section to begin the practices of preparing for their mother's death until the reader meets Anse's new wife at the novel's close. This may be a novel about modernization and a novel about a family losing its mother, but more pointedly, this novel is about what families in this particular place at this particular time in history did to mourn and memorialize their dead—like building the coffin, dressing the corpse, holding a home funeral and transporting the body to the gravesite—before interring their bodies. Interestingly, common practice would also require that the family dig the grave and bury the body in a family plot, but Addie's insistence on being buried in Jefferson flings the family into certain modernizing practices—like utilizing individual gravesites provided in established

¹⁵ See Hubbs; Kartiganer, "Modernism"; Ladd; Matthews, "Machine Age"; and White, among others.

cemeteries—in which they might not have otherwise engaged. In other words, Addie's desire to be buried in Jefferson propels them out of their traditional way of life into a more modern one. Despite their prevalent attempts to follow their folk traditions and adhere to commemorative practices unimpacted by the modern funeral industry, the Bundrens' willingness to obey Addie's wish to be buried in Jefferson requires that they engage in elements of the modernized funeral, allowing them to also engage in and, to some degree, to benefit from other forces of modernization.

The Bundrens represent a more slowly modernizing population in relation to burial practices, but even within the family there are variations on the reactions to and opinions on how to handle death and burial. Each family member's approach to Addie's death and burial is individualized, and this individualization is a marker of modern burial. Each family member takes a different route to understand and come to terms with the loss of wife or mother, and modernity allows for adapted, personal responses to loss and for the distinctive and separate expression of those responses. Though the family does not outsource the building of Addie's coffin or hold the funeral in a funeral home or church, opting instead to adhere to the folk traditions of the rural South, the individual terms in which Faulkner presents their grief and coping indicate something modern about their loss, allowing their folk traditions to mirror the modern funeral industry in a way that foregrounds its inconsistencies.

Vardaman ties the family to old-world understandings of death and burial by making sense of a complicated and ephemeral part of life when he asks if his mother will be going where all of the animals he's seen die on the farm go after they have ceased living. His original fear that his mother will suffocate when locked in the coffin, indicating a misunderstanding of the effects of death on the body, is slowly alleviated as he makes sense of his mother's death by comparing

it to the deaths of “all those rabbits and possums” (66), likening his mother to a fish, and so forth. Similarly, Cash—with a measured and mechanical outlook—builds his mother’s coffin methodically (much like the husband in Frost’s “Home Burial”). His narrative is told in lists and includes a diagram of the coffin, indicating that he is more analytical, more scientific, than his brothers and perhaps needs the measured steps of coffin building to work through his mourning. For Cash, building a strong, secure coffin for his mother’s body to rest in gives him a constructive way to mourn her, to deal with her approaching death productively. The list that makes up his first narrative section does not include just the steps for building a coffin, however. It includes his rationalization for making the coffin on a bevel. Though he starts with concrete reasons why this is the best practice—“There is more surface for the nails to grip” and “The water will have to seep into it on a slant” (82)—Cash starts dipping into the likenesses between a body lying in a coffin and a body lying in a bed, and the “animal magnetism of a dead body” that “makes the stress [of the earth above the coffin] come slanting” (83) as a justification for beveling the edges of the coffin. John T. Matthews describes “animal magnetism” as “culturally produced popular knowledge” (“Machine Age” 87), which classifies this dubious use of the term as a marker of modernizing practices at work on the Bundren family. Beyond the insinuation of a modernizing world creeping into their lives, the usage of this terminology also reveals Cash’s desire to build Addie’s coffin perfectly. Though he has no plans to lacquer the coffin or to reinforce it with metals or to build it out of metal completely (as the modern funeral industry dictates), he does want to build a sound and well-made vessel to hold his mother’s body. Cash’s justifications for building the coffin the way he does may seem more reasonable to groups who have not engaged with the funeral industry by outsourcing each element of funerals and burial because their loved ones die at home in bed. Further, the reality of the body being buried

underground and subjected to the weight of the earth, the water that seeps through the boards of the coffin, and other natural processes that contribute to a body's decomposition after burial are just more tangible for someone in Cash's position who is closer to the natural processes of dying. Just as Vardaman uses his past experiences of seeing animals die to make sense of his mother's passing, Cash focuses on the detailing on the coffin and his reasoning for including those details as a way to do the same. His drive to build the coffin perfectly demands that he reflect on elements of design and engineering, as well as the natural world that will surround the coffin once it's in the earth, for which he does not have the appropriate language or understanding—hence the dubious use of this terminology.

Despite Cash's efforts at mourning in an individualized and productive way, Jewel resents Cash's approach, seeing it as an obsequious effort to ensure that Addie knows how hard he's working to make her soon-to-be deceased body comfortable after she has died. Jewel—who is offended by Cash's understanding of death's inevitability—begins his first narrative section by saying "It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box" (14), the antecedent for "it" presumably being the reason Jewel is so frustrated with Cash. He goes on to point out that "every breath she draws is full of his knocking and sawing where she can see him saying See. See what a good one I am making for you" (14). Jewel feels that Cash is making a show of his building process so that their mother knows that he's the one building it, and he reports that he tried to get Cash to go somewhere else besides the yard in front of the house to build the coffin, but to no avail. He then likens this scene to a time when Cash was a little boy and responded to his mother's wish for fertilizer to grow some flowers in the yard by "taken the bread pan and brought it back from the barn full of dung" (14). Jewel is not bothered that Cash is making their mother confront her own mortality. He seems to

realize that Addie knows she's dying, and he does not seem bothered by having to come to terms with that or by the possibility that his mother will have to come to terms with that. Instead, he is upset by what he thinks is the showiness of Cash's project. Further, Jewel is the only child of Addie's who makes a concerted effort to preserve Addie's body long enough to conduct a burial, rescuing it from various fates that would keep it from making the trip all the way to Jefferson. When the flooded river overtakes the Bundrens' wagon, Jewel goes in after the coffin and returns it safely to land. When Darl sets the barn on fire to try to covertly cremate Addie's body and put an end to the journey to Jefferson, Jewel goes into the barn to rescue the coffin, putting forth a great effort to do so. He fights off Gillespie who tries to hold him back, striking him to the ground and "turn[ing] and run[ning] back into the barn" (221) He briefly calls for help from Darl before he "upends the coffin and slides it single-handed from the saw-horse" (222), turning it end over end until he is clear of the inferno. Jewel does not—and cannot—make such efforts in front of his mother while she is alive, but makes them in an effort to ensure that her body is buried where she requested they bury it. Notably, Jewel and Darl are the only characters who do not have ulterior motives for making the trip. Despite their difficulty in understanding their mother's request, they acquiesce simply because it was her request, though Darl does begin to resist more as the trip drags on.

Darl's attempted cremation of Addie's body in the barn can be read as an indication that Darl, who was in France for "the War," is the only family member who resists this journey and therefore resists modernity for modernity's sake. At war, he has presumably seen what modernization can do to the human body—specifically, the violence that modernization can do to the human body—and tries to keep the family from making it to Jefferson to bury their mother where they will encounter modern elements of interwar culture. Even his attempts to immolate

Addie's body in the barn to keep her body from reaching its destination suggests that he resists modernization in a way that the rest of the family does not understand. This novel critiques modernization, suggesting that modernization for modernization's sake is not necessarily the best policy, but we should also note that Faulkner specifically critiques modernizing burial practices. The Bundrens' approach is fine and self-sufficient; the drive towards the town is problematic. Addie requests this treatment of her body as revenge for the kind of life she felt trapped in and the kind of disrespect and intrusiveness she felt from the rest of her family. The others follow through with her requests not out of respectful commemoration, but out of selfish desires for markers of modernization.

The Bundrens' separation from the funeral industry that exists in towns and cities points to another important factor that influences the way they view Addie's corpse: they are country people who live and work on a farm and so they are close to death in a way that their more distant neighbors and the townspeople are not. Vardaman exhibits anxiety over closing the casket on his mother, saying, "It was not my mother. She went away when the other one laid down in her bed and drew the quilt up. She went away. 'Did she go as far as town?' 'She went further than town.' 'Did all those rabbits and possums go further than town?' God made the rabbits and possums. He made the train. Why must He make a different place for them to go if she is just like the rabbit" (66). While this passage shows the reader the heartbreaking attempts of a young boy to make sense of his mother's death, it also shows that young boy's attempts to make sense of what is supposed to happen to someone *after* death. This fixation on how death affects the body causes him to wonder if his mother will be able to breathe in the coffin, whether or not the body he sees now is actually his mother, and myriad other worrisome things. Vardaman's contemplations of what has happened to his mother includes wondering if "all those rabbits and

possums” he has seen die throughout his short life go to the same place Addie has gone, indicating that he sees a clear correlation between the death of his mother and the death of animals. He takes these musings a step further when he asks, “Why must [God] make a different place for them to go if she is just like the rabbit” (66). This is only the beginning of a string of associations throughout the novel in which Addie is likened to animals. A few examples include Darl’s abstract claim that “Jewel’s mother is a horse” (95), and Vardaman’s insistence on making sense of his mother’s death by saying “My mother is a fish” (84). These kinds of associations tie the Bundrens to the natural world and its relationship with dying by likening a human body—specifically a dead human body—to animal bodies. In so doing, they are tying Addie’s death to the way they understand the natural process of animal life and death. For this family, the life of an animal is inherently tied to the death of that animal, and in so doing they process dying as something that takes place naturally and does not necessitate expensive forms of commemoration or immediate burial. Each member of the family must deal with Addie’s passing differently; thus they grieve individually. After all, maintaining distance from the funeral industry does not release one from grappling with death and its many implications. Instead, distance from this industry made it something more familiar—something for which individuals had a frame of reference as they struggled with their losses.

Though the Bundrens are not as bothered by Addie’s body as their neighbors or the townspeople they encounter, their close neighbors do exhibit some discomfort with their intentions; however, they do not exhibit this discomfort in relation to the Bundrens having to carry out this part of the funerary process. In line with the folk traditions of the rural South, their neighbors help with some of the preparations and attend Addie’s funeral in the Bundren home and are not put off by these practices. Rather, they are bothered that the Bundrens seem to have

no sense of urgency to get Addie buried. When they pass Samson's farm, Samson is disturbed by their excursion for two reasons. First, he knows that the Bundrens had a funeral for Addie earlier, and thinks that they are just "taking a holiday since he got his wife buried" (113), so he is confused to find that they still have her coffin in the wagon with them. Second, he is bothered that they do not seem motivated to get Addie buried as quickly as possible. He offers to let them stay at his farm for the night since they have set out so late, and in order to expedite the process of burial, he offers to let the boys go ahead with Samson's tools "right after supper and have it [the grave] dug and ready" (115) long before the rest of the family shows up with the coffin. In short, Samson is not troubled by the family's intention to carry the body to its final resting place, nor is he bothered by the necessity of having to carry out many of the elements of burial that eventually come to be handled by the funeral industry (in this instance, digging the grave). His distress is based on his idea that "you've got to respect the dead themselves, and a woman that's been dead in a box four days, the best way to respect her is to get her in the ground as quick as you can. But they wouldn't do it" (116). Though Samson makes note of the smell of the body, saying that after the Bundrens left he thought he could still smell it, he realizes that "it wasn't smelling it, but it was just knowing it was there" (118) that drew his attention to the barn. The smell of Addie's decomposing body has left a lasting impression on his sense of smell, meaning that he feels he can still smell her body after the body has been removed from his property, but the prolonged nature of her body's presence in the general area creates a great deal of anxiety for Samson. It was not simply the presence of a dead body or the necessity of the family having to carry out funerary practices themselves that disturbed him, but their lack of urgency to get her buried.

Samson's wife Rachel is not just disturbed by the Bundrens' excursion; she is thoroughly maddened by it. She claims that Anse's actions are an "outrage," and she wishes "that you [Samson] and him [Anse] and all the men in the world that torture us alive and flout us dead, dragging us up and down the country—" (117) but is cut off before she can finish her thought. The implication here is that she feels Addie's body is being disrespectfully displayed just as her body was disrespectfully treated while alive and being compelled to bear children for Anse and work long hours daily on the farm. Though Addie's chapter gives us no indication that she confided to Rachel her opinion that "living was terrible" (171) and her disgust that her "aloneness had been violated" (172) by the expectation of sex and childbirth, the implication is that the women of this socioeconomic and geographic group identify with each other because of the lives their positions necessitate that they lead. Regardless, Rachel's angry outburst communicates an indignity that results from having her body used in life (working the farm, cooking the food, engaging in hard labor to keep Samson's farm going) and the fear that her body, like Addie's, may not be allowed to rest even after she has died. Though Rachel knows that Anse gave Addie "his promised word" that he would bury her in Jefferson and that having her body transported is actually what Addie requested, Rachel sees the way that the trip is being carried out as something wholly disrespectful. As far as Rachel is concerned, the Bundrens are flouting Addie's body and disregarding the need to respect the dead instead of laying her to rest reverentially. Rachel's discomfort registers slightly more and in different ways than the Bundrens' discomfort and has more to do with their adherence to antiquated folkways and unsuccessful attempts to emulate the modern funeral industry.

As they move farther away from their farm, the Bundrens begin to encounter different kinds of resistance to their prolonged proximity to Addie's body. Instead of being outright

repulsed by the fact that the Bundrens are taking so long to get Addie's body buried, the Bundrens' neighbors exhibit mild shock at the actual body and discomfort with the fact that the Bundrens are taking so long in carrying out the funeral procession. Not until they reach Jefferson do the reactions of onlookers transition from mild discomfort to repulsion. As they move further into the modern space of the town, their combination of folkways and poor imitation of modern burial meets with harsh resistance. As the Bundrens move away from the farm and towards the city, they leave behind the reminder that death happens to animals and humans alike. They also get closer to populations that have the financial ability to have someone else carry out funeral practices. The Bundrens represent a kind of rural modernity that requires a closeness to nature, which a more urban or suburban world is no longer used to dealing with because of its distance from the natural process of dying.

***One of Ours* and "A Sharp Physical Fear of Death"**

Like the Bundrens, the Wheelers of *One of Ours* are farmers who have lived off the earth for several generations, placing the family in close proximity to the regularity of the deaths of animals and livestock slaughter necessitated by farm life. Claude has undoubtedly experienced the deaths of many animals throughout the course of his life, but he does not use these animals' deaths to make sense of the deaths of humans as Vardaman does. Instead, Claude develops the fear of funerals and dying that characterizes his early life and allows that fear of human death to define his understanding of animal death. Claude cannot butcher the hogs that died in the snowstorm for meat because he does not see death as a practical part of living on a farm, but is instead disgusted by it and understands it only in terms of terror—an odd development for a character with Claude's background. When Claude's fear of death arises in the first part of this

novel, it generally arises alongside a mention of his coexisting disgust for funerals and for the “terror” of seeing “a neighbor lying rigid in his black coffin” (43). A “black” coffin is not likely to be a homemade wooden casket designed to break down when the family lowers it into the grave they have dug for their loved one. Instead, the “blackness” of the coffin suggests that it is lacquered, designed to withstand the decaying effects of being placed in the earth and to mask the process of decay through which a corpse goes.

Since the funeral industry’s goal is to shoulder the burden of burial and separate the world of the dead as much as possible from the world of the living, modernity’s role in Claude’s life makes him hypersensitive to death. His family is of a wealthier subset of farmers who own their land, can hire workers to help run their farm, own a car, and can make regular trips into town for entertainment, not simply for necessary supplies. Claude’s mention of industrialized funerals, of his stark fear of them, suggests the funeral industry’s prevalence in his area, and his family’s financial status coupled with the presence of the funeral industry has had an impact on his relationship with dying and has thus impacted him through its distancing effects on humanity’s relationship to death—a distancing that appears to have offset or outweighed the proximity of death on a farm. Despite Claude’s relationship with nature and what we would assume would be his acceptance of the natural progression of life towards death, he defines dying by the funeral industry and the distance it creates between the living and the dead.

Claude’s early life is defined by disappointment with the materialistic life of the Midwest dominated by his family¹⁶ and emasculating relationships with his father, his brothers, his mother, and especially his wife Enid.¹⁷ Early sections of the novel present Claude as having “a

¹⁶ See Bash and Kingsbury.

¹⁷ See James, “Enid”; Randall; Ryan; and Yongue.

sharp physical fear of death,” so much so that funerals and coffins “overwhelmed him with terror” (43). Dying scares Claude, but his underlying fear behind his phobia of death is of having his body break down and dissolve into the earth, because “[w]hen he thought of the millions of lonely creatures rotting away under ground life seemed nothing but a trap that caught people for one horrible end.” He fears having to give his “pleasant, warm body over to that filthiness” of “[p]utrefaction” and “decay.” Claude spends many nights “plotting against death, trying to devise some plan of *escaping* it” and vows that “he would actually invent some clever shift to save himself from *dissolution*” (43; emphasis added). Ultimately, then, it is not death that he wants to circumvent. Rather, he fears *dissolution*; he does not want to dissolve, to break apart and seep back into the earth on which he believes he will toil for the rest of his life without having made a bigger impact on this world than that made by a farmer. Though he does not know yet how he will circumvent such a fate, he feels fully confident that he will be able to do so. At the same time that he is “plotting against death,” he is also “angrily wishing he had never been born” (43)—an odd circumvention of the disappointing life Claude finds himself living. While he wants to find a way of avoiding dissolution, he also sees never having been born as a way of avoiding the existential crisis at hand. While one solution requires powering through his life and “inventing” some way of coming to the end of it without dissolving into death, the other solution requires pushing backwards, negating his life, and therefore not having to face this crisis at all. While they seem contradictory, both solutions offer Claude the opportunity to avoid death and the physical and spiritual dissolution that comes with burial.

Even at this early point in his life, however, he does not believe that dissolution comes only with burial. For Claude, dissolution comes when one dies without having made any lasting impact on the world. Early in the novel and shortly after Claude reveals his repulsion at funerals,

Claude asks in a conversation with his friend, Ernest, “Don’t you feel that at this rate there isn’t much in it?...In living at all, going on as we do” (45). By arguing that their current way of life does not have much weight to it, he suggests that there has to be a better way to live—that there has to be a way of living that would eradicate the pointlessness he experiences. He believes that “there ought to be something—well, something splendid about life, sometimes” (46), and indicates that this “something splendid” might alleviate the meaninglessness. Claude’s repulsion at funerals suggests a fear of physical dissolution, of having his body break down in the earth, of letting his body get taken in by the natural process of dying that the funeral industry has separated from the immediate consciousness of the living. The *spiritual* dissolution, however, seems to be of even bigger concern for Claude.

Ironically, modernity creates Claude’s anxiety about death, but it also ends up alleviating that discomfort for him. The modernized world has not only created the kind of lifestyle he leads full of thankless work and material gain, but it has also created the funeral industry that has positioned him to maintain great distance from the reality of death. He has therefore come to fear it in its unfamiliarity. Ernest suggests that Claude is making the same mistake that all Americans make by looking for meaning outside of their own lives and not finding joy in little things, and that this is a symptom of coming from a country that aims for upward mobility. He points out that “In old countries, where not very much can happen to us...we learn to make the most of little things” (46). Claude counters by arguing “the martyrs must have found something outside themselves. Otherwise they could have made themselves comfortable with little things” (46). Throughout the novel, Claude reveres the martyrs of history and sees their actions, their ability to find something outside of themselves, as a key to avoiding dissolution. In his estimation, their lives were far from meaningless because of the impact they had on the world that lived on after

they had died. If buried, these martyrs' bodies have necessarily decomposed in their graves, but that fact does not affect Claude's understanding of their deaths. These martyrs died purposefully—a clear foreshadowing of Claude's understanding of his actions while at war. After all, his involvement in World War I is what ends up alleviating his “sharp physical fear of death” and leading him to a death that he imagines will be martyr-like and meaningful.

The “fear” he exhibits here is not a fear of death explicitly. Instead, he seems to be exhibiting what Ernest Becker (utilizing Kierkegaard)¹⁸ has called a drive towards “death denial” or the need to deny the fact that humans are bound to a physical body that will break down and eventually cease to work any longer. Claude understands that death is an inescapable part of living, and when he says that he tried to “devise some plan of escaping it” he is not trying to escape his actual death but is instead looking for a way to escape the *finality* of it. He does not wish to escape physical dissolution; instead, he aims to eliminate the chance of spiritual dissolution. Claude seeks a life that has purpose, for which he will be remembered, and which will save him from letting his life dwindle away on a farm in Nebraska. Though he does not *seek* death by going to war in France—something his fear of dying logically prohibits—he finds himself confronting death regularly on the frontlines of World War I, and eventually he does not react with horror as he did on the farm at home.

The futility of death, the futility of military service, and the futility of memorialization all become conflated in the final section of *One of Ours* while Claude is at war, positioning World War I as the other “death industry” at work in Claude's world. As the previous chapter argues, World War I produced death in more technological and modernized ways than the world had

¹⁸See Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* and Soren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Dread* and *The Sickness Unto Death*.

previously experienced. The trench walls within which Claude lives while at war, the overseas military cemeteries in which various scenes of the novel show him resting or eating a quick meal, the control he must maintain to take over the burial of fallen comrades, and his willingness to throw his own body into the line of fire all position war as an industry that produces large numbers of dead. In doing so, this industrial-scale modern phenomenon exposes the living to death on a massive scale, and in opposition to the modern funeral industry, which separates the dead from the living, the war brings the living into consistent contact with dismembered, obliterated corpses. Claude seeks heroism that will allow him to die without feeling that his life was meaningless, and warfare promises that kind of heroism. This promise, though, is a lie told often in wartime, and this lie in large part produced literary modernism as writers strove to illuminate its intricacies and problematic nature. This novel illustrates one of the direct contradictions elucidated this movement by showing how an industry that separates the living from the dead (the modern funeral industry) meets head-on an industrialized phenomenon that forces the living to live among the dead and encounter corpses regularly (the war). While one makes Claude hypersensitive to the reality of death and the process of burial, the other desensitizes him and brings him into direct and regular contact with burying the dead, thus providing him a way beyond his initial anxieties about death as a tangible reality.

Claude does not understand his service in war to be futile; in fact, he sees it as being of the utmost importance to his life and to the world as a whole—which is why he is able to risk his life to serve in France. In one scene in the final section of the novel, Claude and his fellow soldier, Hicks, pause during a patrol to have a smoke break in a military cemetery. They sit down next to a grave that reads “Soldat Inconnu, Mort pour La France” (“Unknown Soldier, died for France”) (318). While Claude is thinking that this is “a very good epitaph” because “[m]ost of

the boys who fell in this war were unknown, even to themselves” (318), Hicks is lost in a more skeptical reverie. He says that the word “mort” sounds “deader than dead” and “has a coffinish sound” (319) before saying that the scene surrounding them—lines of graves that contain soldiers, only some of whom are identified, marked with stones that say only that they died for their country—is a “damned silly thing,” asking “who put ‘em here, and what’s the good of it?” (319). Hicks’s reflection focuses on the separation that the French language imposes on the memorialization of the dead. “Mort” sounds “deader than dead” because, as an English speaker, Hicks processes death through his native language. The French word for “died” is further separated from and less tangible to him. The word only appears on this gravestone because the soldier served in a war taking place in France; otherwise the gravestone might have utilized the word for “died” in another language—perhaps in one that carried more emotion for Hicks or for the soldier interred underneath.

Hicks questions the usefulness of graveyards as sites of memory for the same reason. This soldier may have been French or he may have been an Ally; regardless, his family will not be able to visit his grave. Further, he is not commemorated as a man who led an individual life before entering the war. He is commemorated only as a soldier, and his body and his memory are claimed for the country for which he was fighting when he died. This practice does not return the soldier’s individuality, and it does not alleviate the dissolution Claude fears throughout the first part of the novel. This soldier’s individuality dissolved when he died, leaving only the anonymity Claude feared he would meet with his own death. The gravestones marking where these soldiers have been buried seem unnecessary since they do not really individuate the dead—the job intended for gravestones by modern funerary practices—and Hicks asks “what’s the good of it,” referring not just to the gravestones but to the use of the graveyards as sites for anonymous

memorialization. Despite his discomfort with the lack of individuality given to these bodies after death, Hicks does seem to recognize that there is a disciplining force here provided by the presence of the gravestones. Marking a soldier's final resting place with the phrase "died for France" permanently categorizes him as war dead, as a soldier who was willing to fight and die in warfare. What the soldier was before—French, American, some other Ally—no longer matters. His origins cannot be determined and his body and his contribution to the war effort are made sense of through this disciplining practice, dissolving his individuality and preserving only his status as a soldier. The intentions and needs of war mold any sense of his individuality even in death.

Claude recognizes the futility of these men dying young; however, he does not recognize the futility of dying for a country's political goals that Hicks focuses on in this scene. France has come to mean a great deal to him,¹⁹ and though he answers Hicks's reflections by "absently" saying "Search me" (319), subsequent interactions indicate that Claude does not renounce his understanding of the valor of war as a result of this conversation. When Claude finally gets another soldier, Gerhardt, to talk about his life as a successful violinist before entering the war, Gerhardt's fatalistic attitude about the war effort baffles Claude. He asks Gerhardt with surprise "You don't believe we are going to get out of this war what we went in for, do you?....Then I certainly don't see what you're here for" (330). Gerhardt confirms that he does not think the war is being fought for valid reasons, and says that he is there simply because he was the right age when America entered the war. Further, he affirms that he does not think they are fighting "to make the world safe for Democracy, or any rhetoric of that sort" (330). Though the conversation shakes Claude, he continues to believe that his life in the military is better than the life he would

¹⁹ For an extended discussion of Claude's lauding of France as a mythic space, see Sharistanian.

have led at home, and that the purpose he serves in France is more honorable—or at least more adventurous—than his life would have been in Nebraska. Claude’s disagreement with Gerhardt on this subject persists beyond this single interaction, and when the topic comes up again while the two are on leave, Claude’s stance on the purpose of his service in France is unchanged. Even after the conversation has ended and David has fallen asleep, Claude reflects that “no battlefield or country he had seen was as ugly as this world would be if men like his brother Bayliss controlled it altogether” (339)—men concerned with material gain rather than spiritual purpose—but that his experience at war “had shown that there were a great many people left who cared about something else” (339) besides the commonplace concerns of life on a farm.

Military service gives Claude purpose that makes life seem worth living, but it also brings him closer to death and desensitizes him to his revulsion to dying. After the raid in Beaufort when the soldiers have to bury their dead, Claude does not avoid the burial detail out of repugnance; instead, he takes charge and arranges for a priest to give the eulogy and decides when the funeral will take place. He is present for the burials—a stark contrast to the younger Claude who was so disgusted by death and funerals—and openly discusses the importance of various aspects of the burials, like location, order of interment, and content of funeral services. Claude realizes that having died abroad dictates that these soldiers will be interred far away from their homes and their families, but he indicates that he does not feel that this is such a bad thing when he reflects that “Poor Willy Katz, for instance, could never have had such a funeral in South Omaha” (352). His funeral in South Omaha would have presumably taken place much later in life after several decades of unexciting, unheroic, thankless work. His funeral in France takes place only after he served a purpose in the war and therefore promises that he will be defined by a sense of heroism after death.

After having established Claude as a character unfulfilled by life in America who thrives in battle, the novel—perhaps necessarily—concludes with Claude’s death. He sees his death in battle as something inherently heroic, and he is so proud in that moment that understanding him as a character fearful of death no longer seems plausible. Claude has found something to die for because he believes that his life and the deeds he performed during that life will make a difference in the world once he has left it, and dying in battle provides him a route towards heroism and a meaningful death. His final reflection on his and his fellow soldiers’ impending deaths—“They were mortal, but they were unconquerable” (366)—illustrates that he no longer fears death because dying in war is not nearly as horrifying or final as dying at home unfulfilled. Claude’s final thoughts are, of course, of the pride that comes along with dying for an important cause, but his focus on burial brings the reader to focus on the materiality of what that meaningful death produced. Claude and his men do not simply die and disappear from the earth. Their bodies must be carried away from the battlefield, they must be accommodated with a grave, their deaths must be reported to their next of kin, their final letters (still in transit) must be delivered, and—perhaps most important in relation to war dead—they must be commemorated. They do not die and cease to exist. They die and demand action and remembrance.

Claude’s understanding of the war should not be conflated with Cather’s, however, and his newfound understanding of death is not so much a more mature approach to an inevitability but a blatant contradiction resulting from the juxtaposition of two modern industries, one of which pushes death away from the world of the living while the other brings it crashing back into cultural consciousness. As established by Jean Schwind, “the romantic version of the war in *One of Ours* is not Cather’s but Claude’s” (55). Cather does not attribute to Claude characteristics of what Paul Fussell argues is the standard World War I character. He does not dwell “on the now

idyllic period before the present war” because “the present is too boring or exhausting to think of and the future too awful” (Fussell 314), and perhaps this is the source of some reviewers’ confusion. Cather does, however, create many characters that are disenchanted with the war effort who cannot speak of the war in idealized terms and who seek solace in speculation about their futures and fond memories of their pasts. In contrast, Claude’s past is dominated by men like his brother Bayliss, who are only concerned with material gain and who never conceive of their futures in concrete terms. That Cather ends the novel by lamenting that if Claude had been able to come home he most likely would have met the fate of so many other returned soldiers who “one by one...quietly die by their own hand” (370) indicates that war in this novel resonates tragically even after its conclusion.

For Claude, however, war is a source of heroism—regardless of how naïve Cather makes Claude seem as a result of his pursuit. As Claude dies under enemy fire, he reflects on the fact that even though he was dying, “he felt no weakness. He felt only one thing; that he commanded wonderful men” and though many of those “wonderful men” might die, the survivors of the attack would “find them all there” (366) on the battlefield. Claude’s pride in these final moments of his life relies on his ability to fight to the death for an important cause and on his ability to *lead* other men in battle with the conviction that “[t]hey were there to stay until they were carried out to be buried” (366).²⁰ Of course, the importance of their deaths for Claude is not simply that they will die. The importance lies in the fact that they will be found on the battlefield, that they will be carried out, and that they will be buried. The character who at the novel’s beginning was

²⁰ Paul Fussell writes about the importance of this kind of “comradeship” in Great War writing, citing the “homoerotic motif” (278) that these kinds of descriptions elicited. Claude’s relationships with his comrades has been read in these terms; however, the pride he felt for the men with whom he fought also allows him to view death in terms of heroism and alleviates his fear of dissolution upon dying.

so blatantly terrified of a funeral is now proud that he will be buried, bringing the contradictions of the juxtaposition of these two modern industries into focus. While the U.S. is having its dead systematically separated from the land of the living, the combatant nations are engaging in highly technological, highly modernized warfare that destroys the bodies of those who engage in it—including the Americans who enlisted to fight as Allies. Not only the deaths of these soldiers but also the violence enacted on these bodies is broadcast widely and brought unflinchingly into the lives of people who are accustomed to having the modern funeral industry handle their dead for them. While living in trenches, seeing so much death coming from battle, and orchestrating funerals for his fellow soldiers brings Claude into closer contact with the reality of death, it is the heroism of warfare that allows these blatant contradictions to be alleviated and for pride in his death to win out over the fear of death and funerals that characterizes him when the novel begins.

As Schwind further points out, “Claude’s heroic end is not the end of the novel” (55), and the fact that the reader is taken beyond the battlefield and back to Nebraska to experience Claude’s death in full at home should not be oversimplified as something romantic or merely sentimental. His death continues as his family memorializes him at home. The letters that arrive home after Claude’s death indicate that he “died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be” and, as his mother muses, “those were beautiful beliefs to die with” (370)—even if they aren’t beliefs that often survive a soldier’s return home, as evidenced by the many soldiers who “quietly die by their own hand” after their service. Claude’s letters, coupled with the newspaper stories his mother and Mahailey read carefully for news of the war during his absence, bring the violence of warfare into their Midwestern home, showing that though the war took place in Europe and not on U.S. soil, the United States was not

immune to the effects of the clash between the modern funeral industry and the death industry of world-wide, modern, highly technological warfare.

Claude's understanding of death does not fully transform until this final section of the novel. His time at war desensitizes him to the presence of dead bodies, and as a result, the reader sees a drastic shift in Claude's character between the first section of the book where he fears death so thoroughly that he wishes he had never been born, and the last sections of the book in which he is so comfortable with the dead bodies in the walls of the trenches that he is able to pass by them without comment or reaction. When the soldiers in his company take the Boar's Head trench, they do so surrounded by the smell of quick-lime (used to help bodies decompose) and body parts protruding from the trench walls that serve as ever-present reminders of death. Hicks battles with one dead soldier's hand to get it to stay buried in the trench wall, but the earth keeps falling away from it and the fingers keep getting exposed. Hicks reacts to this with frustration and anger: when he and Claude walk by the hand that has been exposed for the third time since they overtook the trench, Hicks "puffed up and got red" and "swore that if he found the man who played dirty jokes, he'd make him eat this one" (362). Notably, this scene passes without any response from Claude. He does not react with "terror" to the sight of a dead soldier because his proximity to the funeral industry and its ability to separate him from the reality of dying has been usurped by the reality of dying that permeates warfare. Dying is unavoidable for most of these soldiers, and those who survive cannot look away from it or seek solace from it in elaborate, expensive funerals since, as Paul Fussell has noted, soldiers died so quickly and in such large numbers that they "were sometimes not buried for months and often simply became an element of parapets and trench walls" (55).

Further, when Claude's company is caught under enemy fire and Claude sees many of his fellow soldiers die in the blast, he acknowledges their deaths, celebrates the valor under which they died, and does not look away from their now-ghastly bodies to avoid understanding the full reality of their passing. Even his own death is greeted with the full understanding of what the bullets "popping about him" (366) are going to do to his body once they make contact and that at the end of this battle he will very likely have to be "carried out to be buried" (366). Because of his exposure to the effects of death on the body, Claude has a more realistic understanding of dying by the end of the novel. He is not desensitized to death in the sense that he approaches it without feeling. In fact, many of the soldiers' deaths in his company affect him greatly and cause him immense sadness. Rather, he approaches death as a basic reality of living because his time at war has made it impossible for burial practices to separate him from the dead. His fear of funerals is replaced by his anticipation of his own funeral and a reverence for their ability to commemorate the dead and display their heroism, making him a more modernized character by the end of the novel. That reverence, however, is set against Hicks's skepticism and realization that burial is just another way to discipline the body after death.

Sanctuary and Sensationalizing the Body

The attention that Faulkner gives to Red's body in *Sanctuary* and the sensationalistic way in which he presents other corpses in the novel provides a useful shift from the treatment of Addie's body in *As I Lay Dying* and the treatment of funerals in *One of Ours*. Faulkner does not write these funeral scenes into the novel to make the corpse more easily understandable or to suggest that a dead body is simply a body that is no longer living. Instead, Tommy's, Goodwin's, Popeye's, and Red's bodies are written as sensationalized corpses. They are fetishized and made

into something very different from a formerly living human body primarily through the sensationalized way in which they die. Popeye shoots Tommy in the back of the head right before raping Temple and kills Red after Temple attempts to become intimate with him. Goodwin is lynched by the townspeople of Jefferson after Temple testifies that he instead of Popeye raped her. Hanged publicly for a crime he did not actually commit, Popeye's death is sensational due to its public nature. Their bodies, after each murder or execution, are presented as something ghastly, something changed a great deal and made grotesque by the act of dying.

Faulkner includes one funeral scene in *Sanctuary*, but the difference between his approach to funereal practices in this novel and in *As I Lay Dying* lies primarily in the horror the funeral attendants display in response to Red's corpse at his jazz-style funeral. As the Bundrens move farther away from their rural farm and closer to Jefferson, the fringe characters start to comment on Addie's smell and the disturbing nature of being so close to a dead body, but the Bundrens take their task in stride, noticing the changes in Addie's body but not hesitating to stay the course. Though Vardaman punctures Addie's face through the lid of the coffin in an attempt to drill air holes with an auger, Faulkner intends the shock to be experienced by the reader. Vardaman does not narrate the scene; in fact, the reader hears about it secondhand in one of Tull's narrative sections. The reader may assume that Tull is disturbed by what Vardaman has done because the scene is a ghastly one to picture. Shortly after recounting that "[w]hen they taken the lid off [of the coffin] they found that two of [Vardaman's attempts to drill air holes] had bored on into her face" (73), his narrative moves quickly past the violation of Addie's body and directly into Anse's burden in having lost a wife, saying, "If it's [losing his wife] a judgment, it aint right. Because the Lord's got more to do than that. He's bound to have....And when folks talk him low, I think to myself he aint that less of a man or he couldn't a bore himself

this long” (73). Tull is primarily concerned with what losing Addie has done to her family. He shows little concern for the integrity of Addie’s corpse beyond the fact that he includes the holes bored into her face in his narrative. Faulkner does not show other characters being disturbed by the accidental disfiguration of Addie’s body. In fact, his inclusion of this detail reverses what happens in preparations for a modern funeral. Instead of beautifying Addie for burial²¹, hiding any visible flaws with make-up and embalming techniques, and preparing her to be viewed as if she has simply lain down to slumber, her body has blemishes and gashes *added* to it before burial. Red’s body, on the other hand, is beautified in preparation for burial in that he is prepared as if he is slumbering in his coffin and the bullet-hole in his head is filled in with wax and covered by a low-sitting hat (249). The beautification of his body, the horrified response of the funeral guests when his face—like Addie’s—is punctured by the wire holding the funeral wreath together and his mortal wound exposed, and the description of the funeral itself serve to set Red’s burial apart as one impacted by a modernized industry.

Red’s funeral scene is described in lavish terms: the tables are draped in black cloth, an orchestra is present, the coffin is described as “an expensive one: black,²² with silver fittings” (242), and the scene is decorated with “a mass of flowers” (242). As Mitford argues, flowers are attributes of modernized funerals, and Faulkner presents them in abundance in this scene. They appear “[i]n wreaths and crosses and other shapes of ceremonial mortality” and take on a somewhat aggressive quality when Faulkner writes that “the mass appeared to break in a symbolical wave over the bier and on upon the platform and the piano, the scent of them thickly oppressive” (242). The music, the refreshments, the flowers, the expensive coffin, and the cars

²¹ With the aforementioned exception of dressing her in her wedding dress.

²² Much like the coffin Claude Wheeler encounters early in *One of Ours*.

involved in the funeral procession after the ceremony are all elements of the modern funeral that require a commercial exchange of funding and feed into a quintessentially modern industry.

The modernization of death in America came not only out of the commodification of the dead body and funereal practices, however, but out of intercultural encounters as well. Funereal practices as they existed toward the beginning of the twentieth century were impacted heavily by the cultural interactions brought about by and within global modernity. In Joseph Roach's chapter on the planning of the city of New Orleans around the burial of the dead, he reports that Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the architect charged with the development of the city, kept journals on his encounters with African slaves that reveal communication barriers, particularly when dealing with funereal practices. Latrobe observed a funeral procession on May 4, 1819 that included at least 200 African Americans headed toward the burial plot for the deceased. He reports that the "children played among the human bones turned up by the gravedigger's shovel" and that one young girl, the granddaughter of the deceased woman, threw herself into the shallow, watery grave and would not get up until "[t]he gravedigger, assisted by other mourners, pulled the keening woman forcibly out of the grave and carried her away" (60). Latrobe did not understand this as a gesture of respect and saw it instead as "mere distress" (62). Roach argues, however, that Latrobe's misreading of this situation is simply misrecognition of "incorporated memory as spontaneous emotion" (62), suggesting that this performance of grief is simply part of the common funereal practices of the African culture. Since Latrobe had not previously encountered such practices, he misunderstood the actions he was witnessing to be extemporaneous manifestations of suffering and anguish. This early manifestation of the New Orleans jazz funeral about which Latrobe writes represents one of many that took place as African slaves entered what is now the United States. For example, traditional jazz funerals (like the one

represented in *Sanctuary*) still take place in New Orleans and other areas of the Deep South. Though this type of funeral may follow a sort of tradition, Roach reports that “there is no such thing as a typical jazz funeral: the tradition is that the observances are adapted to suit the occasion” (177).

The proprietor of the dance hall where Red’s funeral is held exclaims at one point “I aint running no funeral parlor” (245), but in a sense he is in that he fits the descriptions of modern funeral directors given by Mitford in *The American Way of Death* and Suzanne E. Smith in *To Serve the Living* and presides over the sort of intercultural encounter in the modernization of funeral practices that Roach discusses. The jazz funeral patterns that Red’s funeral follows align his funeral with those practiced in African American culture at the time. Smith writes that the rise of the funeral home was the most important development in the modern funeral industry not simply because it centralized the major elements of the modern funeral so that all parts of the process could be completed and paid for under the same roof. Funeral homes also offered gathering places for minority groups—primarily African Americans—to congregate without white chaperones or white surveillance. Black funeral directors often rented rooms in their homes to groups for social events so that attendees could drink, dance, and play music (activities often prohibited in churches, which were often the only other option for all-black gatherings) without being under the scrutiny of Jim Crow laws that dictated that black people couldn't gather in large groups in public spaces. The dance hall proprietor serves as a stand-in for the African American funeral home director in that he is renting this space for Red’s jazz-style funeral to take place and providing a place for the funeral attendees to gather as a large group, dance, and imbibe without the scrutiny of prohibition-era law enforcement or Jim Crow-era surveillance concerned with the mixing of races or the gathering of African Americans in large groups.

The scene in which Red's body is knocked out of the casket is sensationalistic and reveals the shock of the funeral guests and elicits shock from the reader as those who knew him while he was alive encounter him for the first time as a dead body. When four funeral guests and a bouncer from the dance hall get into a fight and crash into the bier, the chaos of the drunken fight escalates as someone yells "Catch it!" (248), referring to the coffin. The guest who gives this warning shouts at the threat of coming into contact with Red's dead body. When the "coffin crash[es] heavily to the floor, coming open," Red's corpse "tumble[s] slowly and sedately out and [comes] to a rest with its face in the center of a wreath" (248). The proprietor follows the revelation of his body by shouting "Play something!... Play! Play!" (248) while waving his arms in a distracting manner hoping to divert the attention of the funeral guests. Red's body is picked up off the floor, but the wire that is holding the wreath together is stuck through the skin of his face. The piercing of his skin is reminiscent of the mutilation of Addie's face when Vardaman drills holes in his mother's coffin to make sure she can breathe—a parallel made stronger by the bullet hole in Red's forehead that "had been neatly plugged with wax and was painted" (249), indicating that the cosmetological elements of the modern funeral industry (the application of make-up, the beautification of the body, the covering up of flaws or grisly injuries, etc.) are at work in this funeral. The attempts to beautify Red's body, however, are thwarted in a ghastly way when "the wax [is] jarred out and lost" (249), pointing the funeral guests' (and the reader's) attention directly to Red's deadly injury. His mutilation is handled much differently than Addie's, however. Though the Bundren family is jarred by the mutilation, they do not attempt to cover it up or disguise it before burial. The guests at Red's funeral, on the other hand, look for the piece of wax in hopes of being able to re-plug the bullet hole, and when they are unable to find it, they realize that by "unfastening the snap in the peak, they could draw the cap down to

his eyes” (249), effectively covering up the bullet hole. Faulkner leaves the problem of the hole left by the wire open-ended, providing his readers with something shocking to take away from this scene.

Red’s funeral in *Sanctuary* carries the hallmarks of a jazz funeral not only because it is “adapted to suit the occasion,” but also because it represents rituals meant to *celebrate* the life of the deceased. Many of the details of the ceremony are discussed in direct relation to what Red would have wanted. The reader is given no indication that Red was a church-going man, but he is instead painted as a womanizer who engaged in nefarious activity. It stands to reason, therefore, that his funeral would be held in a dance hall (a regular site of carousing, drinking, and womanizing) as would be in keeping with the deceased’s personality and lifestyle. Red partook of alcohol pretty heavily throughout the portion of the narrative arc that takes place before his death, so holding a wake at which the refreshments were not spiked with bootlegged whiskey would seem like an odd decision on the part of those organizing his funeral. The first words given by a funeral guest, in fact, come from the fat man in the green suit mixing the punch, who invites people to drink by saying, “Come on, folks. It’s on Gene. It dont cost you nothing. Step up and drink. There wasn’t never a better boy walked than him” (244). He then adds more whiskey to the bowl and pushes his invitation further by adding, “I aint nothing but a bootlegger, but he [Red] never had a better friend than me. Step up and drink folks. There’s more where that come from” (244). This enthusiastic offering of alcohol and the wordplay Faulkner utilizes by conflating the bier that holds up the coffin with Gene’s misunderstanding that someone has brought beer to the funeral²³ act together to indicate that Red’s funeral has been tailored to fit his

²³ In response to the fight that is breaking out: “‘Folks! Folks!’ the proprietor shouted. ‘Dont you realise there’s a bier in that room?’ ‘Beer?’ Gene said. ‘Beer?’ He said in a broken voice. ‘Is anybody here trying to insult me

interests just as Roach argues a jazz funeral would be, further underscoring the importance of individualism in the modern funeral. In a vein similar to the information given by the fat man in the green suit and the repeated references to the availability of alcohol, we are told that “Red wouldn’t like [the funeral] solemn” (245) and “Never nobody liked dancing no better than Red” (244). We know about Red’s past and what he would have wanted because he and the other guests allow themselves to speak candidly and sometimes crassly about the deceased and the actions of the people with whom he kept company. The guests’ remembrances of Red consist of what might be expected in a funeral scene. Their comments are laced with “observances” that are “adapted to suit the occasion,” such as the praise the fat man in the green suit heaps upon Red when he claims that “[t]here wasn’t never a better boy walked than him” (244).

Faulkner does not present this dance hall as a *stand-in* for a funeral home in the absence of such an establishment; it represents an *actual* funeral home (despite the proprietor’s insistence that he is not in that kind of business). Perhaps the most modern quality of the modern funeral industry is the rise of the funeral home as a place where funerals are arranged, staged, held, and financed. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, funeral directing became a profession rather than just a practice. Trade organizations, professional societies, and “formal training and a state license for embalming” (Smith 50) had become hallmarks of this industry, and those who sought funeral directing as a career increased exponentially around the turn of the century. Suzanne Smith writes that “[f]rom the 1880s through the 1920s, the number of funeral directors in the United States had expanded approximately as fast as the living population” (67). The spaces in which funeral directors practiced shifted during this period, as well. Before the

by—” (247). Presumably, the insult is coming from someone bringing beer when Gene has already provided his bootlegged whiskey.

1910s and 1920s, “funeral directors tended to work out of small offices and travel to the homes of the deceased to embalm the body.” As the world around the profession modernized and clients no longer insisted on having a viewing of the body in a parlor at home, funeral directors began to develop their spaces of business so that they were no longer working out of small, unimpressive offices, but were now working out of large, elaborate funeral homes where all of the funeral arrangements and the majority of the funeral ceremony would take place. During this period, many funeral homes also began maintaining their own cemeteries²⁴ and housing an entire fleet of funerary vehicles in order to give clients the most elaborate set of choices among their competitors, since funerals were now more public than ever and were increasingly becoming an indicator of the deceased’s status in life. Shifting the funeral from a home space to a public space came about as a result of many “larger cultural forces including urbanization and the rise of the modern hospital, which transformed death into a clinical rather than a familial experience.” As populations urbanized, funeral homes became more accessible to a larger populace as these businesses were now more centralized, and as the medical field advanced and “death in hospital settings became more commonplace,” dying became a sanitized phenomenon no longer managed by families but instead requiring funeral directors to “take more control over the management of the corpse” (Smith 67-8).²⁵

²⁴ This took place most often in the black funeral homes because of Jim Crow legislation that dictated that black people could not be buried in white cemeteries. The funeral directors established these cemeteries to ensure that “separate but equal” legislation actually delivered on its assertion that “separate” could actually be “equal.”

²⁵ Further, as families warmed to the idea of removing the “ominous presence of the deceased from the home” and placing “clear parameters around the mourning process,” the architectural field embarked on a movement “to remove any associations with death from the home” by insisting that home designs and magazine stories in publications like *Ladies Home Journal* not use the term “parlor” but instead call that space the “living room” (Smith 68).

The discussion of the music between the proprietor, the leader of the orchestra, and the funeral guests may best describe the tension these white Southerners feel at the impact that intercultural exchange has had on something as supposedly sacred as funereal practices. The funeral guest insists that the orchestra play some jazz music for the guests, but the proprietor responds by saying, “No, no....Time Gene gets them all ginned up on free whiskey, they’ll start dancing. It’ll look bad.” The appearance of the funeral was of the utmost importance to the modern funeral home owner (as it is to the contemporary funeral home owners to this day) because their job was to cater to the needs of the living. Putting together a funeral that meets the loved ones’ expectations was their primary objective, so as this scene wears on, the dance hall proprietor’s claim that he “aint running no funeral parlor” becomes increasingly more ironic and indefensible. Because European tradition indicates that funerals are intended to be sacred, solemn, and defined by sadness and grief, the prospect of having funeral guests dancing in risqué and boisterous ways seems counterintuitive to the proprietor. However, in the New Orleans jazz funeral tradition dancing and celebrating are not incompatible with grieving and mourning. They often complement each other as the guests process their loss and celebrate the life of the person who has passed. Roach argues that a jazz-style funeral may include “celebration as well as solemnity” (177), and along with the jazz music comes dancing. These funerals often include entertainment and festivities that are fitting for the person being mourned. A beloved jazz saxophone player’s funeral might include jazz saxophone music just as a jazz trombone player’s funeral might include some jazz trombone pieces. This particular funeral guest asked for jazz music specifically because “nobody liked dancing no better than Red” and he wanted to fill his funeral with activities he would have enjoyed and that would have fit his character—just as the traditional jazz funeral aims to do. As John T. Matthews points out, these attributes of Red’s

funeral create discomfort because they encapsulate “the unevenness of cultural and social progress through inadvertent hybridity” and point to “the certain impermanence of racial distinction, hinted at by the dislocation of jazz from racial origin and use” (Preface 5). The intercultural nature of this funeral points to the unavoidably intercultural nature of American life in the late 1920s and serves to make the proprietor of the dance hall uncomfortable and anxious because these elements represent the introduction of African culture into European American funereal practices.²⁶ Discomfort is to be expected as the “impermanence of racial distinction” has historically caused tension in the American South, but the discomfort displayed by the dance hall proprietor forces the reader to examine more closely the role that race plays in this scene. As Erich Nunn argues, racial discourse is a central element here and “[t]he discourses of race in the novel and those of violence, death, and mourning inform and enable each other” (78).

Whatever other rituals traditional jazz funerals include, Roach writes that they must include a ritual referred to as “cutting the body loose” in which “the deceased parts company with the procession in his honor” (178) and is allowed to move (in a very modern way) from the space dedicated to the living to a space reserved for the dead so that the two do not walk among each other. After Red’s body is knocked out of the coffin, the funeral guests file out of the dance hall and into their cars and taxis and form a cortège made up of the hearse and six touring cars “with the tops back, driven by liveried chauffeurs and filled with flowers” (249). These seven vehicles are followed by “a nondescript line of taxis, roadsters, sedans, which increased as the procession moved slowly through the restricted district where faces peered from beneath lowered shades, toward the main artery that led back out of town, toward the cemetery” (249). While Red

²⁶ The discomfort felt by the proprietor is the result of a mixing of culture and the tension related in this scene is therefore compounded for the reader by the presence of Negro servers despite the fact that they tend to fade into the background in Faulkner’s description of the wake.

is being transported from the funeral to the burial site, we see several indications that this funeral is happening in a modernized space in a modernized time that run much deeper than just the presence of motorized vehicles and the implementation of technology. Mitford's research asks the reader to focus on the presence of flowers and the renting of the vehicles as signs of modernization. Roach's work, however, directs attention to the separation of the cemetery from the town and the presence of the servants who, though they are marginalized in this scene, are reminders that intercultural encounters have allowed this kind of funeral to come together in the first place. This is so clearly a jazz funeral that the guests directly observe the ritual of "cutting the body loose" as the cars full of funeral guests begin to drop out of procession. The narrator observes that "[a]t each intersections they would turn this way or that, until at last only the hearse and the six Packards were left, each carrying no occupant save the liveried driver" (249). By this point, Red has been mourned and is no longer referred to as a person. He is no longer a funeral *subject* who would "want" his wake to play out in a certain way. He is not an "occupant" of the hearse whose comfort or preferences should be considered. He is merely a body on the way to the graveyard that is separated from the town—a trend that Roach points out in his research is a mark of modernity and intended to keep the living separated from the dead. Ultimately, such separation helps keep the dead unfamiliar and death sensationalized in the eyes of the living.

In this novel, the horror of seeing a dead body outside of the realm of the dead (the coffin) and within the realm of the living (the jazz hall serving as a funeral parlor) does not only accompany Red's funeral, but manifests in Tommy's murder and Popeye's and Goodwin's executions, as well. With the exception of Goodwin's execution, which manifests as a violent live cremation, this novel looks away from death as Faulkner chooses to kill his characters "off screen," just after a chapter ends or in a scene that is only alluded to in dialogue between

characters but not actually shown to the reader in real time. Tommy's murder happens just off-screen, as well. Faulkner shows Popeye "[drawing] his hand from his coat pocket" (102) to point the gun at Tommy. The narrative then skips to Temple's perception of the scene as she hears the sound of the gun going off that was "no louder than the striking of a match; a short, minor sound shutting down upon the scene, the instant, with a profound finality, completely isolating it" (102). In fact, we only know that Popeye shot a gun because after we hear the vague "minor sound," Popeye turns to her and "waggle[s] the pistol slightly and put[s] it back in his coat" (102). The novel looks away from Red's actual murder much more dramatically than it looks away from Tommy's. The reader is privy to the possibility that Red sleeps with Temple without Popeye's observation at the end of chapter twenty-four, and chapter twenty-five opens with the preparations for Red's funeral. The novel portrays Popeye's execution slightly more directly, but his execution scene ends with the sheriff springing the trap on the gallows. The section leaves no doubt that Popeye is executed and by whom, but Faulkner does not display Popeye's hanging body for the reader and instead turns the novel's narrative eye away just before his death.

Despite the fact that the novel often looks away from sensationalistic violence like murder and rape, the shock of having a dead body occupy the space of the living is not lessened. Red's body is the only body formally mourned in the narrative, but Faulkner's unwillingness to show Popeye's execution or Red's or Tommy's murders heightens their shock value. Faulkner introduces these acts of violence, turns the novel's narrative eye away from them at the moment that they take place, and then refocuses the reader on the aftermath of the violence by showing how characters react to it. Interestingly, Faulkner sensationalizes Tommy's murder and Popeye's execution by looking away from them, but sensationalizes Red's body by having the reader look directly at it. He chooses not to do this while Red is being murdered, however. Instead, he makes

a spectacle of the body after it has been prepared for burial and beautified for the funeral, with the gunshot wound that killed him filled with wax and covered with his hat. His corpse occupies the world of the living for a bit too long and outside of the standard parameters (the coffin on the bier) of such mourning practices. In doing so, Faulkner assigns the more horrific response the characters have in this novel to a dead body in a scene where the body is embalmed and made-up for viewing, but seems to take on a kind of life after death when the drunk funeral guests overturn the coffin and send his body out onto the dance floor. Faulkner does not show a group of characters aghast at seeing an execution or murder. He does not show Tommy's dead body lying in the barn shot through the skull, describe Popeye killing Red, give the reader a view of Temple getting raped, or illustrate Popeye being hanged to death. Faulkner dramatizes violence through its conspicuous absence, and sensationalizes the corpse by having it occupy the world of the living a bit too long and bit too actively for comfort in the modern era.

Gary Laderman concludes *Rest in Peace* by saying that his book asks "How do Americans live with their dead?" (212), a question which preoccupies most studies of funereal practice. Interestingly, Charles O. Jackson posits in contrast that "[f]or Americans in the twentieth century, connection between the world of the dead and that of the living has been largely severed and the dead world is disappearing" (229). Their views are conflicting, as are the views of many other texts on the topic of American death practices that focus on how the dead are separated from the living, how Americans have come to disengage themselves from the need to process the effects death has on the human body, and how commodification has changed our

understandings of death and the purposes that burial serves. At the heart of these practices, though, lies a drive to live with the fact that death is inevitable and dead bodies are unavoidable.

Jackson's view of funereal practice aligns with Faulkner and Cather's representations of burial in that he focuses his analysis on the separation of the dead from the living through various advancements in modern burial. The shifts in honoring the dead that took place during the interwar period as a result of a quickly modernizing world illuminate little-studied modernizing forces at work in Faulkner and Cather's novels. In the conversation about modernization, the impact of mechanization, the process of urbanization, and the U.S.'s involvement in international politics and culture spurred by increased ability to transport people and information across large distances receive the bulk of the attention.²⁷ However, our relationship to burial is as inextricable from our lives as is our relationship to death, so it stands to reason that burial practices played just as much of a role in modernization as more traditionally studied developments. Modernization infiltrated burial practices, like transportation industries, communication industries, and machinery industries; and like these industries, the funeral industry merits no less study than modern literature itself.

²⁷ See landmark texts such as Berman, Kittler, and Thacker.

Chapter 3

Burning Bodies:

Co-Opting the Empowerment of Cremation in Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*

“The American way of burial deals with the decay of the material body via preservation. Embalmed, coffined, and buried, the preserved dead are said to be merely sleeping, patiently awaiting a future bodily resurrection, perhaps in a coffin designed to provide eternal protection from the elements....The American way of cremation confronts decay very differently. This way, too, shields mourners from the rotting corpse. But it deals with decay by accelerating, not arresting, it. Rather than preserving the corpse through embalming, cremationists annihilate it through incineration....In the dance between attraction to and revulsion from the dead, cremation tilts toward revulsion. By destroying the dead through the tonic of fire, cremationists inoculate the living from the dangers of death and decay.”

--Stephen Prothero, *Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America*

The power of cremation carries a great deal of weight in Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*. In light of the oppressive system of industrialized burial discussed in chapter two, and with such responsibility for the dead reclaimed, cremation in modernist literature becomes a symbol of empowerment in which those charged with handling a dead body—or disposing of a dead body, as the case may be—can alleviate themselves of the weight of an oppressive industry. *The Loved One* shifts the discussion from direct opposition to dark satire while also refocusing on the importance of the funeral industry in the conversation about funerary power. Waugh's novel centers on two crematoriums in Hollywood and equates the lavish nature of this industry with the lavish nature of the movie business by juxtaposing the two trades. Both industries rely heavily on appearances and spectacle, have vast reach in consumer markets, and are successful ultimately because of their massive profitability. This novel features highly satirical representations of

corpse beautification and the expensive (and often violent) preparation of the body for burial. Towards the end of the novel, Joyboy finds that Aimee has committed suicide and, in direct opposition to the beautification process that he and Aimee held so dear in their careers as morticians, he chooses to have her cremated at the pet crematorium where Barlow works. In doing so, Joyboy reclaims the power Aimee challenged with her fickleness in jumping back and forth romantically between Barlow and Joyboy. Waugh utilizes crematory imagery and satirizes industrial burial of all kinds. In so doing, *The Loved One* questions the simplicity of a shift from exploitive U.S. burial practices to more enlightened and consumer-friendly crematory trends. Instead, this novel points to the fact that these changes happened slowly and recursively, and argues that, given time, industry and manipulation and can will overtake their alternatives.

Cremation's Advancement

Though it is a complicated one, the U.S.'s relationship with cremation is one colored by power and purification—especially in its very complicated relationship to the burial industry. In the early to mid-1800s, discussion of cremation was fueled by anxiety about the violence and destruction the practice enacted on corpses (Prothero 109). This anxiety began to wane towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. In fact, in 1916 an editorialist for the *Scientific American* argued, “Cremation is indeed a method no longer on trial” in the U.S. (qtd. in Prothero 109), indicating that the decades of skepticism on the subject had finally been conquered by the ecological, financial, and sanitary advantages offered by the practice. Though the movement toward viewing cremation as an economical and ethical way of handling the dead had gained momentum by the end of the nineteenth century, “at the turn of the century the American crematory was still an ongoing experiment” (Prothero 112). The process was not

widely practiced until a few decades later when individuals were actually encouraged to build and begin operating crematories. In fact, these establishments did not exist in abundant numbers until a few decades later. The founding of the Cremation Association of America in 1913 provided support for individuals interesting in building and operating crematoriums, and by 1919 this association included about seventy crematoriums (Prothero 110).

While cremation, in its earliest increase of popularity in the United States, served as a way to take the ritual of burial back from the grasp of the burial industry, crematories were not successful until they were monetarily successful: they could not thrive as a service until they could thrive as a business. At the turn of the century, it was rare for a cemetery to include cremation in its services, but cemetery superintendents soon realized that “it made more sense to profit from cremation—through urn burials and sales of columbarium niches or burial plots—than to perpetually thumb their noses at it” (Prothero 119). As a result, by the end of the Depression era, “roughly 60 percent of the crematories in North America were run by cemeteries. The rest were run by independent operators, funeral directors, nonprofit organizations, or local, state, or federal governments” (120).

Though this trend suggests the industrialization of the handling of the dead was unavoidable in the modern age, the cremation movement did succeed in separating itself from such industrialization—if only temporarily. Patrons were compelled to use a crematorium to process a dead body, but they did not have to purchase a niche in the columbariums for the ashes of their loved one as they would have had to purchase a burial plot in a cemetery for the embalmed body of their loved one. Those who chose cremation were much more likely to scatter the ashes in a meaningful location or keep them in the home than to store them away in a cubby in a cemetery (Prothero 4), and “these improvised rites need not employ undertakers or clerics,

but as a rule they are spiritually charged” and often “seem to provoke deeper spiritual experiences in participants than traditional wakes, funerals, and graveside committals” (12). This practice, in other words, is associated with spiritual liberation rather than bodily interment in the earth. Cremation offers the opportunity for individuals to take power away from industrialized forces and utilize it themselves by handling the body of a loved one in a more personal and individualized way. Further, this method of handling the dead allows the deceased’s body to occupy space within the world of the living rather than being kept distinctly separated from it. The popularity of scattering one’s ashes at a childhood home, favorite vacation destination, or place of personal significance, destabilizes the common tendency to lay the dead to rest in a place far removed from the living.

As the previous chapter established, the burial industry during the 1920s and 1930s had become significantly industrialized, but in the process, it had become manipulative and exploitative, taking advantage of grieving families in order to increase profits. These unjust practices, unfortunately, tended to affect the lower socioeconomic classes more heavily, therefore impacting African American communities extensively. Burial agencies (in which a patron could buy membership and pay a small fee every month or year until his or her death to alleviate the financial burden of burial) and burial insurance (which operated on a similar model) became significantly more common but rarely addressed the financial burden on the family that they were intended to assuage because funeral directors and funeral home owners were adept at talking the family into a more expensive coffin, more flowers, or more services using the deceased’s insurance or agency payments as leverage. (This meant the difference between “Her membership with this agency/payments into this insurance program were able to cover the cost

of this funeral” and “She has already paid a significant fee into the burial, so the burden on you won’t be *as* heavy.”)

In older cultures in which cremation was used regularly as an end-of-life ceremonial practice, the burning involved in cremating a body was traditionally associated with purification. With this association in mind, the widening acceptance of cremation during the early decades of the twentieth century allowed the practice to emerge as an alternative to the industrialized burial industry. Widening acceptance does not, however, suggest that that acceptance was universal during the 1920s and 1930s. At this time, the majority of Americans still viewed cremation as an unprecedentedly violent practice, though all end-of-life treatment of the body (including embalming) is inherently violent. Cremation requires placing a body in a crematorium so that the body is reduced to chemical compounds (gases, vapor, solids). The violence we see is inherent to the process. The body’s decomposition gets sped up so that the body’s basic components do not pose a health threat to the living and the remains can be disposed of in more personalized ways or kept within the realm of the living. Embalming, though it preserves the body and keeps it from decomposing, is inherently violent, too. It requires that organs be removed, that the body be forcibly filled with hazardous chemicals, and that the body be coaxed—sometimes forced—into pleasing positions appropriate for a funereal visitation. Though the end result is more pleasant to look at, the process is, in fact, inherently violent. Funeral directors and graveyard owners had yet to utilize the opportunity to pull cremation under their umbrella of influence, so families who chose to cremate were often able to do so cheaply and with more control over the ceremony that surrounded the end of a loved one’s life. Crematories had at their disposal two common symbolisms often attributed to fire: destruction and purification. To the extent that crematories promoted their services, they focused on the purifying effects of this practice and downplayed

the destructive, violent nature of what happens to the body during the process.²⁸ Those interested in cremation as an end-of-life option began to recognize not only the symbolism of purifying the loved one's memory and body of the hardships of life and the tragedy of dying, but they also came to value this practice as a sanitizing custom in line with the twentieth century's desire to separate the dead from the living. Rather than embalming to slow decomposition, cremation allowed for the rapid speeding up of decomposition so that the body (now ashes and bone fragments) became safe to keep within the realm of the living.

In addition to the purifying qualities of cremation, this practice could also offer a sense of empowerment to families who chose this route. Cremation allowed for the family to control the ceremony and the location of the loved one's remains. They could choose to bury the ashes if the idea of segregating the dead from the living by use of graveyards appealed to them. The deceased or the family of the deceased could also choose to scatter the ashes in a meaningful location to return the loved one to the earth. Scattering ashes required direct contact with the material remains of a dead body (though these remains were transformed and de-volitized by the process of cremation), contrasting with the generally maintained separation between the living and the dead dictated by the twentieth century's approach to end-of-life treatment. In essence, this option allowed those involved in such a ceremony to push back against established norms without having to break with the common practice completely. Because cremation has such purifying qualities, however, a family could instead choose to keep the ashes in the family home, on a mantle or bookshelf, as a consistent reminder of and memorial to a loved one. Eliminating the vileness of the dead body by speeding up the decomposition process could effectively

²⁸ The practice had not yet lost the taboo that traditionally surrounded it. Crematories advertised and sought out customers, obviously, but they did not do so hoping to convert someone who was likely to bury (Prothero 115-117).

eliminate the need to separate the dead from the living, allowing the family to keep the loved one's remains close to them. The options made available through cremation were much more vast than those mentioned here, but regardless of the final resting place of the body's remains, cremation empowered families and the deceased against an exploitative industry focused on profits and up-selling.

Satirizing an Industry

The Loved One openly addresses the corrupt nature of the funeral industry in the United States, calling its practices, intentions, and morals into question alongside the empty and posed nature of the budding Hollywood lifestyle. Waugh, a British outsider looking in on U.S. culture, makes some astute observations about the comparably ingenuine natures of the movie industry and the burial industry. In the first chapter of the novel, Sir Francis describes a Russian experiment in which a dog's head has been severed from its body, but given the necessary supply of blood to keep the head functional. He argues to Barlow, the funeral home owner, "That's what all of us are, you know, out here. The studios keep us going with a pump. We are still just capable of a few crude reactions—nothing more. If we ever got disconnected from our bottle, we should simply crumble" (14). This scene creates a powerful image of the film industry as something comparable to a scientist keeping a severed head alive, or at least allowing it to go through the motions of life, by giving it all of its necessary nutrients in an artificial way. In so doing, Waugh calls into question the conscience and the morality of the film industry (a question posed by many writers and critics very early in the industry's existence). This image also smacks of embalment, except that the nutrients being fed to the dog's head would not be nutrients, but poisons and preservatives meant to make it seem as if it were living long after the dog's life had

ended. In doing so, Waugh also shows the grotesque nature of an industry that would syphon so much money and so many resources into creating forms of entertainment based on illusion that require little imagination on the part of the viewer in order to be enjoyed. The product of the film industry is animation—the artifice of heightened life, glamour, and vitality. In much the same way, the burial industry manufactures illusions for bereaved loved ones by making the corpse more lifelike and giving the living an opportunity to grieve without having to encounter the realities of death’s impact on the body.

The novel is not only concerned with the likeness between the movie industry and the funeral industry; Waugh also has his characters use their engagement in these industries as markers of status. At the start of the novel, Dennis Barlow, a struggling poet who came to California to work on a movie script, reveals his intentions to leave the movie business. Sir Francis Hinsley, his housemate and mentor of sorts, praises Barlow’s decision, calling his intention to leave a “heroic resolution to set up in an independent trade” (15). He does so, however, as a way to praise him for leaving the entertainment business,²⁹ not as a way to encourage him in his funerary dealings. Waugh can observe the effects the funerary industry has had on U.S. culture and portrays them by juxtaposing the kind of positioning, posing, and empty promises characteristic of the film industry with the goings on in the funeral industry, even as the funeral industry begins to co-opt cremation and pull it under the standard umbrella of services offered by Whispering Glades—an elaborate and expensive funeral home with expansive burial grounds and extravagant burial packages available to its customers. This juxtaposition of the funeral industry (one the general public would like to assume is focused solely on providing a

²⁹ Barlow leaves the entertainment business because he is not getting enough work and needs to find a career that is more lucrative in order to afford to stay in the United States.

necessary service to grieving families) with the film industry (often described as one corrupted by money) allows Waugh to create an important conversation about how the funeral industry became something corrupt and incorrigible in American society during the modernist period. Further, his novel creates a conversation about cremation's absorption into the corrupt funeral industry's milieu of high costs and upselling, which exploits grief rather than allowing the practice to continue offering an empowered, independent alternative to a corrupt industry.

Studies of Waugh's relationship to and indictment of Hollywood and the materialistic and shallow nature of U.S. culture or his focus on the artist's dilemma³⁰ are much more prevalent than his insightful indictment of how cremation is co-opted by the funeral industry. Even articles that focus on the absurdity of *Whispering Glades* or Waugh's interest in death and end-of-life treatment³¹ seem to miss this important element of his novel. Though the corruption of Hollywood and the plight of the artist inform this novel in important ways, Waugh signals in many ways that the funeral industry is not mere background fodder for this text's main argument. Many scenes of *The Loved One* are set in a massive and expensively maintained graveyard, many characters have careers that center around burial practices and trends, Barlow hones a deep interest in *Whispering Glades*' practices, and Aimee's body is cremated in a very troubling way at the end of the novel. James M. Decker and Kenneth Womack point out, for example, that Waugh "explicitly draw[s] a correspondence between Hollywood's denizens and those of a graveyard" (54), suggesting that there is an artistic death that comes along with buying into the Hollywood scene and creating the unartful dribble that comes out of the film industry. These authors are in line with critical trends in that they focus on Hollywood as the central element of

³⁰ See Allen, Davis, Decker and Womack, and Lasseter, among others.

³¹ See Barnard, Lynch, Milthorp, and Williams, among others.

the novel, while the funeral industry is a mere tool, a background movement that allows Waugh to point out the absurdity of Hollywood ethics. While the rise of the film industry and the growth of Hollywood were important contributors to this time period and created a serious plight for the artist, Waugh's novel also utilizes the well-established corruption of the film industry to illustrate the development and corruption of the funeral industry. Though studies focused on how the funeral industry operates in this novel do exist, they are much less common and tend to gloss over the importance of the cultural context of shifts in burial practices to which the novel responds. James J. Lynch's article "*The Loved One* and *The Art Guide of Forest Lawn*" serves as a prime example. Lynch examines *The Art Guide of Forest Lawn* as a source text for Waugh's portrayal of Whispering Glades, describing Waugh's affinity for Forest Lawn cemetery, the hours he spent there during his time in Hollywood, his careful consideration of *The Art Guide*, and his emulation of its rhetoric when describing the sales pitch and the voice recordings at Whispering Glades. Lynch's short article, however, does not delve into the history of burial in the United States or the rise of funerals in an industry, and that cultural context has the ability to change the way we read the novel completely. *The Loved One* is not solely inspired by one source text but rather reacts to several decades of a business forming, evolving, being corrupted, and shifting into a money-grubbing industry that utilizes absurdly solemn and flowery language to prey on grief.

In fact, Waugh directly ties the indicators of Hollywood's influence on American culture to the important changes taking place in the funeral industry. One important marker of Hollywood's influence during this period had to do with the process of animation. Moving pictures and especially cartoons were huge innovations of the entertainment industry before World War I and saw massive improvements during the interwar period. The developments in

the ability to create movement on the screen fascinated viewers. With similar goals of simulating life, the burial industry aims to make the corpse more lifelike by embalming it, dressing it up, using cosmetics, and giving the face an expression of comfortable slumber. By making the corpse look more alive, the industry creates an object of fascination for the funeral attendee. Cremation, on the other hand, while it speeds up the decomposition process and purifies the remains so that they may exist within the world of the living, makes a corpse less alive. It stymies lifelike positions on corpses by eliminating the very thing on the funeral industry operates. The violence of this practice discussed in previous section may be part of what created discomfort about cremation among the parts of the population that continued to resist it during this era.

Cremation creates discomfort for a variety of reasons—despite its growing popularity during the interwar period. In *The Loved One*, Waugh focuses the reader's discomfort by juxtaposing not just the funeral and the movie industries, but human burial and animal burial. He aims to draw a clear line between what is expected for humans (expensive cremation, interment, and funerary rites) and what is acceptable for animals (the significantly cheaper process of cremation). The initial scenes of the novel that illustrate the burial industry show Barlow acting as funeral director to the beloved pets of rich families—a service that Waugh presents as frivolous and unnecessary. A Mr. and Mrs. Heinkel call The Happier Hunting Ground Pet Mortuary to report that their dog has passed away while they were at the theatre—a further link the novel draws between the burial industry and the entertainment business. Barlow rushes over, collects the pet's remains, and the conversation that follows his arrival is supposedly a fairly standard one in which Barlow offers services of various expenses and the family chooses the more expensive options. The “best [urn] will be good enough” (20) for this family's pet, they

prefer a niche in the columbarium instead of keeping the urn in their home, they ask for a funeral service even though they are not “what you might call very church-going people” (20), and upon being offered a dove’s release “at the moment of committal,” Mr. Heinkel says, “Yes...I reckon Mrs. Heinkel would appreciate the dove” (21). The one exception is that when Barlow asks if they would like to have the animal interred or incinerated, Mr. Heinkel chooses cremation. Generally, this would be the less expensive option, but this novel shows how the funeral industry has co-opted cremation, making it difficult to commemorate a loved one without dependence on other services offered by this industry. While this scene certainly illustrates the kind of industry that has grown up around commemoration and death rites in the United States, Waugh’s decision to illustrate it first in relation to pets before showing any human funereal practices shows how outlandish industrialized funereal practices had become in the United States during the modern period.

After all, the novel directly addresses the fact that burial is different in the United States than it is in other countries—namely, England. Early in the novel, Barlow (who is an Englishman) is described as performing work in the United States that is below the standard for an Englishman. When Sir Ambrose tells Barlow earlier in the novel that “[t]here are jobs that an Englishman just doesn’t take,” he reveals disdain for Barlow’s line of employment. The insinuation here is not that handling a dead body is below the dignity of the average Englishman, but rather that handling *pets*—rather than humans—in preparation for elaborate funerals is an absurd occupation for Sir Ambrose and supposedly the rest of the displaced British population in the United States. Further, to one raised outside of American culture, the elaborate funerals of the United States seem garish and unnecessary—as does the Hollywood film industry. To extend that extravagance and pomp to a pet is even more odd. Barlow, being charged with gathering

deceased pets and trying to sell families expensive caskets and urns, elaborate funeral processions, and other trappings of American funerary practice, marks a comical (but not unrealistic) extension of the fascination with commodified funerals that characterizes American deathways in the modern period.

This is not to suggest that the novel argues that Americans have been fully taken with the idea of elaborate pet funerals. Barlow's boss, Mr. Schultz, points out that though disposing of the pet's body "properly" is a necessity of sorts, families usually skimp on the elaborate trappings. The state of American burial practices during this period dictates that having to make end-of-life decisions for a human means not only purchasing a gravesite, coffin, and vault (in many places), but also spending elaborate sums of money on the embalment, the bodily preparations for an open-casket viewing, the flowers, the procession, and many other smaller elements that make the funeral respectable. As Mr. Schultz puts it, Americans spend thousands of dollars commemorating "relations they've hated all their lives, while the pets who've loved them and stood by them, never asked no questions, never complained rich or poor, sickness or health, gets buried anyhow like they was just animals" (61). For Mr. Schultz, the death of a pet or a loved one is a kind of alchemy (to use Prothero's terminology). The death of a relative turns a person who may have been a disdainful nuisance into someone worthy of an elaborate funeral while the death of a beloved cat, dog, bird, etc. turns the true "loved one" into nothing more than an animal, leaving their owners asking, "Is a headstone really socially essential?" (62). Most interesting about this alchemy is the focus on the social necessity as well as the legal necessity. The owners are interested in the minimum necessities for disposing of their deceased pets "just so the city don't have him and make me ashamed" (61). Certainly, there were minimum governmental standards for disposing of any dead body by this period in American society, but

these standards addressed where and how deep the pet could be buried.³² The patrons at Happier Hunting Grounds do not voice their concerns in terms of what is lawfully required of them, however. Instead, they focus on what is socially acceptable and what they must do in order to avoid public shame over the death of their pet.

Human deaths create similar anxieties for the characters in this novel. When Barlow's friend, Sir Francis, commits suicide and the question of his funeral arises, it does so in terms of how the Englishmen involved in the film industry in Hollywood—a close-knit group of men interested in maintaining the reputation of displaced Brits working in Los Angeles—are going to pull together enough money to organize a funeral that will put “the British colony right in the eyes of the industry” (36). Ostensibly, Waugh is referencing the film industry in which they are all involved, but considering how closely tied the film and funeral industries are in this novel, assuming that Sir Ambrose is not at all concerned with how they will appear in light of the funeral industry would be erroneous. The film and funeral industries are, after all, very similar in the sense that they both stage expensive representations of emotional moments. Funerals reflect and affect the status of the bereaved, not just the deceased. Presumably, the funeral and the film industries could both be represented by the image of the severed dog's head pumped with blood and kept barely alive by basic necessities. The head salivates when it smells a cat, but the head is not connected to a body that can run towards the cat or do anything about this basic and involuntary reaction. It shows basic signs of life, but is incapable of actually living. The dog's head is an illusion—just as films and funerals are illusions representative of reality. Movies imitate reality but cannot be authentic artifacts because they are copies of reality. Similarly,

³² According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, a pet was to be buried only on private property, and the burial location was to be chosen in regards to groundwater and wells.

funerals (as they are described in this novel and as they are marketed by the burial industry) make the corpse more lifelike via artificial means to make a body look as if it were alive and slumbering peacefully.

Despite the blatant similarities that Waugh draws between the film industry and the burial industry, Barlow is not especially familiar with the materiality of a dead human body. Chapter three begins by juxtaposing Barlow's chosen profession, his generation's "vicarious intimacy with death" (37), and his distance from actual human corpses. He is a pet mortician who lived through the World Wars and who, thanks to the distance the funeral industry places between the living and the dead, had never seen a dead body until he finds that his friend, Sir Francis, has hanged himself in their home after losing his job as a Hollywood screenwriter. His distance from actual dead bodies aside, Barlow reacts to finding the dead body with calm acknowledgment. He does not weep or wail; instead, he accepts the scene before him as "the kind of thing to be expected in the world he knew" (37). Barlow's generation may experience "vicarious intimacy with death" but in a general sense that intimacy is, indeed, "vicarious." Because of the modern American burial industry, death can be brought to the forefront of a population's attention through wars, epidemics, and other catastrophes, but that same population can have no idea what actually happens to a body after the metaphysical alchemy of death. Barlow is in a unique situation in that his place in history positions him to be "vicariously familiar" with death as a reality, but his chosen profession positions him to be familiarized with and curious about the processes through which death takes a body.

Coupled with Barlow's quick acceptance is a sense of genuine interest as he drives to Whispering Glades to arrange Sir Francis's funeral. Waugh describes the funeral home and accompanying graveyard in grandiose terms, from the "Golden Gates" that granted admission to

the grounds, which were “vast, the largest in the world, and freshly regilt” (38), to the proclamation of “The Dream” that inspired Whispering Glades (a declaration from The Dreamer, Wilbur Kenworth—a character the reader never meets—inscribed on a monument at the front of the grounds), to the elaborate buildings, and the carefully sectioned-off cemetery complete with themes to fit the personalities of the people to be interred there, and other extravagant details meant to draw in customers. Barlow is walked through each of the services that the funeral home offers, some of which are fairly standard (embalment, burial space, a funeral service with flowers and other trappings), and some of which are exceedingly extravagant and over the top, like the leave-taking arrangements in the Slumber Room, which allow those closest to the departed to spend time in a room with the deceased embalmed and arranged on a couch as if he were simply sleeping. The reasoning behind this option is to give those who have survived the deceased the opportunity to see the loved one when he or she is not “on a bed of pain surrounded by all the gruesome concomitants of the sick room or the hospital” and can instead see him or her “as they knew them in buoyant life, transfigured with peace and happiness” (51). At the funeral those who have survived the deceased will “have time only for a last look as they file past,” but in the Slumber Room, those who have arranged the funeral to follow “can stand as long as they like photographing a last beautiful memory on the mind” (51). The funeral guests do not take actual photographs of the dead body; they are simply encouraged to preserve the memory of the loved one posed as if he or she were still alive. Just as the film in which Barlow used to work artificially recreates life, the funeral industry in which he expresses such interest positions the dead to imitate living beings.

Ironically, many of Whispering Glades’s services are offered regardless of whether the body is to be cremated. That is to say that a body taken to this funeral home will be embalmed;

dressed and made-up for a funeral service; and entombed in a sarcophagus, grave, or other vessel even though the body is to be incinerated after the service and before entombment. In fact, the attendant at the funeral home does not even question whether Barlow will want to have Sir Francis entombed—a process rendered unnecessary by the practice of cremation. She asks, “What had you in mind? Embalmmment of course, and after that incineration or not, according to taste” (42), acknowledging that cremation is not for everyone, but assuring him that this is one of the services they offer. Her insistence upon clarifying the cremation process reveals her awareness that cremation still creates anxiety for many of their patrons. She explains to Barlow, “Our crematory is on scientific principles, the heat is so intense that all inessentials are volatilized” (42-3). She then goes on to assure him that they have accounted for the fact that “some people did not like the thought that ashes of the casket and clothing were mixed with the Loved One’s” (43), acknowledging the idea that cremation’s attraction for their patrons is the promise of its purifying abilities. To contaminate the ashes with clothing or other non-organic material would threaten that promise. As Prothero points out, a very small percentage of the United States’ population is comfortable with the idea of cremation even in the twenty-first century. The inclusion of this service in Whispering Glades’ funeral options signals Waugh’s awareness of changing funerary practices, but it also signals an awareness of shifting anxieties on the part of American culture immediately following World War II.

Only Aimee, the mortician’s assistant at Whispering Glades, matches Barlow’s interest in the elaborate process of preparing a body for burial, and her role mirrors that of several necessary roles in the film industry. Aimee is trained in doing the hair, nails, and make-up for the deceased’s funeral service (much like cosmetologists on film sets) and “brief[ing] the embalmers for expression and pose” (55-6) by meeting in advance with the loved one arranging the funeral

(much like a set technician in charge of blocking a scene). She and the loved one decide what expression and accouterment of positioning (toys for children, flowers for women, etc.) best fit the deceased based on the life he or she led (tying her also to the props department on a movie set). Her interest even trumps that of Joyboy (the man whom she believes she is in love with—though unrequitedly), who in this analogy stands in as the director because of his role as the head mortician. Though Aimee extols his virtues and talents excessively throughout the novel (including the seriousness he brings to any task), he shows significantly less enthusiasm for his career than she does for hers.

Because of Joyboy's seriousness and Barlow's glibness about death and funeral preparation, Aimee finds herself confused about her apparent love for both of these men. She believes she *should* love Joyboy because of his respectability, but finds herself attracted to Barlow regardless. To resolve such confusion, Aimee writes to the Guru Brahmin, who turns out to be two men who work for a magazine answering letters from the lovelorn and the lost. In a baffling twist of plot, Aimee asks the Guru Brahmin to tell her whether or not she is in love with Mr. Joyboy, and later, whether or not she is in love with Barlow. The Guru Brahmin writes back,³³ telling her what steps to take towards figuring out her love life, warning her against confusing love with "esteem for a man's character and admiration of his business ability" (100). Later, when she asks him if she should be upset with Barlow's casual approach to "things that should be Sacred" (102), Mr. Slump responds by telling her, "A home-loving, home-making American girl should find nothing to complain of in the treatment you describe....The only explanation of your changed attitude is that you do not love him as he has the right to expect, in

³³ The reader finds later in the novel when encountering the writer, Mr. Slump, that he writes with superficial interest in her actual love life which eventually turns into disgust and disregard after Mr. Slump is fired from his position

which case you should tell him so frankly at the first opportunity” (118-119). Aimee’s letters, which focus on her innermost feelings and confusions and request reliable definition of those feelings from a stranger, are perplexing and seem to be rather random additions to the novel that serve only to make Aimee into an easily mocked character.

The letters, however, coupled with Aimee’s confusion and complete dependence on the advice of a stranger, are perhaps a result of Aimee’s complete dependence on industries and markets that have co-opted basic human feelings for the purpose of profit. Like the severed dog’s head that has its nutrients pumped into it to have it continue resembling life, Aimee wants this advice columnist to pump ideas into her brain. Similar to the patrons of the modern funeral industry that manages human feelings during moments of grief in order to turn a profit, Aimee has entrusted her emotions to the advice of an author solely concerned with monetary gain. Aimee has given her life over to her position within the funeral industry, which tells people when, how, and how much to grieve. The industry supplies the context of grief, the trappings of grief, and the parameters for grief. Aimee is such a product of her industry-driven environment that no emotion is genuine for her, and she turns to a similar industry that supplies the context, the trappings, and the parameters of *love*. She must check her emotions, what they mean, how to act on them (or not act on them) by first running them through some kind of cultural meaning-maker like a magazine that mediates feelings for people—much as a funeral mediates the grief of those who have lost loved ones. Furthermore, Aimee exhibits confusion about more than just the authenticity of her feelings for Joyboy and Barlow. Throughout the novel, Aimee proves unable to make basic decisions or communicate her basic needs. Her relationship with Barlow is marked by an inability to discern whether or not she should be insulted by his glib nature. Her relationship with Joyboy is defined by an inability to know whether or not she is in love with him

or if she merely respects his work. In chapter six, after deciding to marry Joyboy instead of Barlow (a decision she did not feel it was necessary to tell Barlow about) she goes with Joyboy to have dinner with his mother. After introductions, Joyboy asks if Aimee is hungry, and her befuddled response is “No, yes! I suppose a little” (113). She treats deciding whether or not she wants to eat as a taxing and confusing endeavor in the wake of meeting Joyboy’s overbearing and bad-mannered mother. This characteristic inability to decide something on her own carries through to the end of her life, when an angry Mr. Slump (the man who writes the letters for the Guru Brahmin column) responds to Aimee’s final inquiry via telephone about her confusing love life by telling her to “take the elevator to the top floor. Find a nice window and jump out” (147). He not only prescribes her death, but he prescribes a *spectacular* death, one that might have been difficult to imagine before the rise of film’s popularity but which is now easy to envision. As evidenced by her interactions with others throughout the novel, Aimee’s susceptibility to manipulation and her inability to make a decision lead her to take this suggestion seriously as a way to address her current conundrum rather than as an insulting brush-off from someone enraged at the position from which he was just fired.

Aimee does not jump to her death, however. As a product of a world influenced in unprecedented ways by the media and the voices of manipulative industries, and as an employee and unflinching supporter of one of those manipulative industries, she allows a man she had never met to talk her into committing suicide over her incomprehensible feelings for Barlow and Joyboy. Her method of suicide is striking, though. Perhaps the only decision she does make in her end-of-life treatment is to inject herself with embalming fluid in Joyboy’s office to end her life rather than jumping out of a window. She personalizes her method of dying and attempts to dictate—to the greatest extent that she is able—how her body will be treated once it is no longer

alive. Rather than freeing herself from the profit-seeking source that drove her to suicide, however, she ties herself to the funeral industry in an irreversible way, solidifying her dependence on these kinds of industries.

Perhaps she makes this choice because she finds herself so comfortable with (and dependent on) the process of embalming and stopping natural bodily decay that she wants to stop the decaying process before it starts. Jumping from a window would ruin her body and she would no longer look the way a “home-loving, home-making American girl” (118) should look. Embalming fluid, while it will end her life, will presumably stop the decaying process before it starts, ensuring that when Joyboy finds her (and of course he will since she takes her life in his office) she will still look as attractive as she always has. Aimee essentially becomes the corpse she has beautified throughout her short career at Whispering Glades—or perhaps a movie starlet immortalized by having her likeness captured on the movie screen. She internalizes, mentally and physically, the suggestions of profit-seeking institutions in hopes of having difficult end-of-life decisions made for her during an inherently difficult moment. We cannot ignore, though, the fact that the use of the embalming fluid will change her body from a living being into a corpse.

Cremation’s ability to free someone from the grasp of the funeral industry plays out most powerfully in this novel in relation to Aimee’s cremation, which takes place because Barlow manipulates Joyboy into believing that her death in his office will look suspicious. Her cremation disregards any end-of-life treatment she might have preferred and makes a mockery of her ability to control the way those who survive her treat her body after she has died, but it also frees her, in a sense, from the grips of an industry that has so crippled her ability to make her own decisions and develop as an individual. Her choice to use embalming fluid to end her life suggests a complete dependence upon the burial industry and other industries upon which she has relied

heavily, eliminating her own agency in the process. Ironically, Aimee is like a pet to Joyboy and Barlow. She follows commands, she tries to fit the needs of those around her, every action is dictated by what others expect of her. Her only act that requires any agency is her suicide, and though her career motivated the method she chose, the decision to end her own life came about as a result of someone else's command. Aimee is the severed dog's head having blood and nutrients pumped into it to give it the semblance of life.

Perhaps appropriately, the men plan to have her body incinerated at the Happier Hunting Ground—the pet mortuary that she found so repugnant—in order to save the two any further trouble in regards to handling her death. She has no family, after all, and the only two people who will miss her are involved in her dubious end-of-life decisions. Her body not only ends up being completely at the mercy of the funeral industry, but she is subjected to a section of the industry for which she has held extreme contempt. Joyboy, beside himself with grief and panic, allows Barlow, who seems indifferent to Aimee's death, to persuade him to pay to have her body incinerated so that Barlow can secure comfortable passage back to England. Even the description of Aimee's incineration reads as something manipulative and violent. Barlow reflects on the process of cremation, noting that he “must rake out the glowing ashes, pound up the skull and pelvis perhaps and disperse the fragments” (163), and he does so without any comment on the violence of these actions. Clearly, this is a process he is used to performing, the violence of which no longer bothers him. He has, of course, witnessed a dead body that has been hanged and seen the beginnings of the natural decomposition process, and he has shown an intense interest in the process of embalmment for a formal funeral, both of which involve processes that are just as violent as the process of cremation. Joyboy and Aimee, the representatives of that industry, do not have control over Aimee's end-of-life treatment. Barlow has taken control of that process

completely, though he has done so in a manipulative way that mirrors the manipulative nature of the burial industry that critics of the industry often disparage.

Aimee is like the dog brought to the Happier Hunt Ground Pet Mortuary at the beginning of the novel who died while his owners were at the theatre. She is loyal and obedient, but she is also neglected by the “family” to which she “belongs.” To strengthen this analogy, Barlow’s last move in his relationship with Aimee and his resentment of Joyboy is to follow through on the final service offered to customers of the Happier Hunting Ground: a postcard sent every year on the anniversary of the cremation that assures the pet’s owner that the pet remembers and loves him or her despite his death. Undeterred by Joyboy’s horror at Aimee’s way of dying and his fear that he will be suspected of foul play—two emotions that make Aimee’s death, in many ways, even more traumatic for him—Barlow does not take pity on Joyboy’s grief. Instead, he arranges for Joyboy to receive a postcard in the mail every year on the anniversary of Aimee’s death that says “Your little Aimee is wagging her tail in heaven tonight, thinking of you” (163), solidifying Aimee’s likeness to a pet.

Barlow understands that Joyboy’s feelings for Aimee and Aimee’s feelings for the both of them were not genuine. They were as posed and simulated as the slumbering corpse at a funeral or the performance of stars and starlets on a movie screen. By the end of the novel, however, Barlow does not stand as a paragon of authenticity. He comes to represent a manipulative industry focused solely on making profit and securing further business. Similarly, Joyboy does not stand up as the epitome of the bereaved who are dependent upon the burial industry. He is complicit in the falsity of his trade, and therefore he comes to represent the same kind of manipulation of emotion that Barlow does—the only difference being that he is not immune to having that manipulation enacted upon himself. He depends upon the services

associated with burial to make a living, but he also depends upon public expectations of specific funereal practices for a deceased loved one.

Though, as Prothero has pointed out, in the United States we still treat cremation as a way to step away from the burial industry and take more control over the commemoration of our loved ones, the funeral industry has nevertheless taken up the mantle of trying to offer commemorative practices and trappings that complement a cremation. Despite the basic facts that cremation is easier to execute than burial, and because of its sanitary nature has fewer laws surrounding it than does interment, the funeral industry has still co-opted this practice, taking it out of the hands of the bereaved and putting it back into the hands of an industry.

In short, this novel satirizes the significance of cremation as a response to the oppressive burial industry—and the power of that industry to co-opt its direct response. *The Loved One* is a direct indictment of the burial industry that addresses the business-like nature of arranging a burial and the insufferable reality that cremation—in some ways an alternative to this corrupted industry—will always carry the potential of being taken over by the funeral industry if those who run it are persistent and incisive enough to bank on the grief of mourning loved ones. Barlow, eventually coming to represent a corrupt and heartless funeral director, manipulates Aimee in a way that ends up driving her to suicide and utilizes Joyboy's grief caused by his loss and anxiety over being thought the cause of her death to trick him into having her cremated in a way that would have disgusted her—in the same oven that cremated the pets at the pet cemetery that she so looked down upon. In this sense, cremation is not so much a source of empowerment for Joyboy as it is a source of degradation to Aimee's body and memory and a means of

manipulation for Barlow. In this novel, the empowerment offered by cremation takes a backseat to the anxiety and disgust that result from corrupt funerary practices.

Coda

Cautionary Bodies:

Decay and Preservation Anxieties in Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*

When you cut a man's arm off you have to do something with it. You can't just leave it lying around. Do you send it to hospitals so guys can pick it to pieces and see how an arm works? Do you wrap it up in an old newspaper and throw it into the junk heap? Do you bury it? After all it's part of a man a very important part of a man and it should be treated respectfully. Do you take it out and bury it and say a little prayer? You should because it's human flesh and it died young and it deserves a good sendoff.

-- Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*

Through this study, I have traced a trend in the representation of burial practices that starts with novelists overtly concerned with World War I burial and the implications of international and modernized warfare for the human body and the innately human impetus to grieve and commemorate. I then moved into a discussion of the modernization of the funeral industry, its corrupt nature, and its industrialization of cremation—all of which seem to indicate a sense of growing anxiety about modern burial for the authors in question. Just as the coming of World War I set the warring nations on edge, so did World War II, but with one monumental distinction. World War I had supposedly been “the war to end all wars.” The world had seen what modernized warfare could inflict upon the body. As many nations stood on the precipice of another modern, global conflict, anxiety about how to handle another influx of death began to rise. Dalton Trumbo draws on this anxiety in *Johnny Got His Gun* in order to warn against the prospect of widespread, government-sanctioned violence. His warning comes in the form of Joe

Bonham, a character halfway between life and death who troubles the supposedly distinct line between the world of the living and the world of the dead by not being classifiable as either. Trumbo draws his readers' attention to the anxiety that has been built up around decay as it relates not just to the human body, but to food, sound, and other markers of modern progress. Though his novel was figured as a warning against the coming of the Second World War, it reveals deep-seated anxieties about death, decay, and preservation that are inherent in a world in which the living and the dead have been separated, but a world which now faces a potential influx of death.

The narrative opens following a trench bombing during World War I and addresses events from that specific military conflict. The text evokes imagery of bodily mutilation during wartime, the fear of massive death tolls, and the anxieties about the resulting decay in order to tell the story of a soldier who now functions as a living corpse. Joe is the complete antithesis of Donald Mahon from William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay*. Donald's body is fully functional but he has no motivation to use it to communicate with those around him, whereas Joe has no bodily agency to communicate with those around him or connect with other human beings, but he desires little else—except perhaps the agency to take his own life. Criticism of the novel tends to focus on Joe as a post-human figure (Blackmore) or as an adamant but voiceless opponent of warfare as those opinions relate to Trumbo's political stance.³⁴ Both approaches elucidate important elements of the novel. Joe cannot live on his own, cannot end his own life, and for much of the novel he cannot sense the majority of the activity taking place around him. He is living, but he is also dead. He is human, but he is also part machine in that he could not live on his own without feeding tubes and other medical equipment. His narrative consistently points to

³⁴ See Kriegel, Lundberg, Palmer, Serlin, and Solomon.

a cultural anxiety about modernized war-related death and voices those concerns via anxieties about burial, preservation, and the sanitized relationship between the living and the dead in the United States. In so doing, this novel responds to the developments in burial practices during the interwar period by not only illustrating interactions between the wholly living and the mostly dead but also by allowing that mostly dead character a voice with which to explore the effects of those interwar changes.

Large death tolls gave way to the kind of anxiety Joe exhibits, which grows out of the grotesque bodily mutilation that produces visible bodily decay. In the novel, Joe wakes up in a hospital bed and slowly realizes that he has had his arms and legs amputated, has gone deaf and blind, and no longer has a face with which to smell, taste, or speak. He desires respectful treatment of his body parts and is disgusted at the possibility that they could have been discarded as garbage. World War I hospital workers often had to remove piles of limbs from medical tents and bury or burn them to avoid diseases and contamination brought on by decay. This kind of disposal, however, was not accompanied by the kind of commemoration expected when burying an entire body, and it reversed the kind of separation between the living and the dead that modern civilization had come to expect. This segregation fostered increased discomfort with and anxiety about decay, and out of this anxiety grew an effort to preserve various elements of life, like food and nourishment, human interaction and communication, corpses, and various other things subject to dissipation or decomposition. With these attempts, however, came a realization that preservative technologies are never permanent, thus compounding decay anxiety in a vicious cycle. Decay anxiety, the resulting modern focus on preservation, and unease about the undependable nature of preservative technologies elucidate Joe's erratic stream of consciousness narrative focused on his mangled, dismembered body. The novel's primary message is that of an

anti-war sentiment, however, and utilizing Joe's war-ravaged body and his interactions with the hospital staff (who exemplify discomfort with decay and bodily breakdown) allows Trumbo a powerful vehicle for discussing not just the effects of war on a body, but the effects of war on a combatant nation.

As Joe slowly begins to recognize his bodily condition, his emotional state oscillates from horror to anger to contempt. Eventually, he comes to realize not only that he is no longer living (although tubes and medical treatment keep him alive), but also that he is not dead, either. As he begins to recognize his liminal state, he comes to believe that he lost all agency when he lost his limbs and his ability to communicate with the world around him.³⁵ Joe's anger and depression over his liminality connects him to long-standing Western approaches to preserving, burying, and commemorating the dead and newly developed medical advances that blurred the lines between the living and the non-living.

While Joe's amputated limbs link him to the grave, the necessity for commemoration and preservation extends beyond his lost arms and legs to his entire "dead while alive" (220) body. The act of commemorating the dead grew out of the modern desire to preserve corpses to safeguard against decay, which led to many elements of modern commemorative practices, like visiting and caring for the grave of the deceased. He likens his hospital bed to "a grave with six feet of earth above" (230), describing himself as "the dead-man-who-is-alive" and "the live-man-who-is-dead" (234). Further, he views his own body as a kind of tomb. While trying to get his nurse to realize that his tapping is not a function of frustration or insanity but is instead an attempt to communicate, he thinks, "please god make her understand what I'm trying to tell her.

³⁵ Of course, later in the novel he regains agency when he develops communicative techniques, indicating that agency primarily requires a mind, and though it requires a body to transmit its thoughts, it does not need to be an unblemished, fully functioning, whole body.

I've been alone so long god I've been here for years and years suffocating smothering dead while alive like a man who has been buried in a casket deep in the ground" (220). If his hospital bed is his grave, his body is the casket for his consciousness. As he's trying to communicate, he envisions conversation with another person as that which would allow him, entombed in his body, to break through his burial container and scream, "I'm alive I'm alive I'm alive let me out open the lid dig away the dirt" (220) so he can reenter the world of the living. The proximity of the nurse to his perceived burial site conjures images of commemoration; the duties of washing him and changing his dressings mimic the process of preparing a corpse for burial, while also simulating the tending of a gravesite and decorating it with flowers. Though he assumes that a few of his night nurses are young and inexperienced, he assumes that his day nurse is older and perhaps more comfortable with war-torn bodies and therefore tends to him with what he perceives to be a kind of affection. The younger nurse who replaces the long-standing day nurse—the nurse who writes "Merry Christmas" on his chest (205-207) and opens the door for communication—also exceeds the general call of duty in the hospital and performs her work with great compassion. This kind of "grave" care characterizes modern funereal practices and resonates with the modern world's focus on preserving the bodies, resting places, and memories of the dead, and it links Joe to memorializing practices that position him as a mostly dead body rather than a living being.

Joe recognizes his liminality, and he understands that he is positioned closer to death than to life. Specifically, he understands himself to be akin to a slab of beef or some other cut of meat—the materiality of a body after life has left it. Several times during his interment in his hospital bed, Joe likens his own body to food susceptible to decay and subjected to modern preservation methods. As cultural historians like Jessica Mitford and Jonathan Sterne have

argued, anxiety about decay leads to a focus on preservation; Sterne pushes this cultural critique further by arguing that preservation extends beyond the body into techniques like canning and meat preservation to slow food from rotting. In *Johnny Got His Gun*, Trumbo conflates these different preservative techniques in Joe's consciousness. During the first half of the novel, Joe often references memories of his mother preserving fruits and vegetables and his father freezing and preserving meat and the importance of that practice in his family's survival, establishing his parents as nurturers who could provide sustenance for the family even during hard financial times. He remembers his mother working "from day to day and from week to week scarcely ever getting out of the kitchen," as she "canned peaches and cherries and raspberries and blackberries and plums and apricots and made jams and jellies and preserves and chili sauces" (17). Later, he thinks of her canning practices again, saying, "By the end of the season her cellar was packed. You would go down there and beside the great crocks of water-glassed eggs there would be mason jars of every kind of fruit you could want" (109). He also references his father's practice of going to the market to buy fresh meat so that, when the weather turned cold, "[t]here would be a quarter of beef and maybe half a hog hanging on the back porch frozen through and always fresh" so that "[w]hen you wanted a steak you simply took a saw and you sawed the steak off and besides being better it didn't cost you anything like the butcher shops charged" (108-09). Joe remembers all of these skills in relation to his family's rough financial state and realizes that despite the fact that they did not make very much money, they "ate good food fine food rich food better food than people ate in the cities. Even rich people in the cities couldn't get vegetables as fresh or as crisp. They couldn't get meat as well cured. No amount of money could buy that. Those things you had to raise for yourself" (110). The cultural impact of being able to can fruits and vegetables, preserve eggs for the winter, and freeze and cure meat to make a purchase last

longer is certainly important for the quality of human life and the longevity of the human lifespan during this time period. For the Bonhams, the ability to preserve (in this case, food) means an easier, more comfortable, and healthier life. Food preservation carries the air of something ethical because of its sustainability, whereas *not* preserving food to be eaten during harder times is associated with hunger and deprivation. Sterne points out that the connections between the practice of preserving food and the practice of embalming, along with preservative and reproduction technologies related to sound, were important by-products of modernity's anxiety about decay. He argues that a "desire for permanence" in relation to various types of preservation "was an extension of changing practices and understandings of preserving food and bodies" during the nineteenth century (12). In an era marked by unrelenting change and innovation, these various types of preservation served as answers to accelerating social and cultural transformation.

As he comes to terms with his post-battle condition, Joe begins to see himself as "nothing but a piece of meat" (64) because he has no agency. His body is not breaking down exactly as a corpse would be, but it has begun to come apart, in a sense. Regardless, he cannot classify himself as a fully living being. For Joe, his body is comparable to the preserved meat his father hung on their back porch. Shortly after recalling his family's practices of preserving meat, he opens a chapter by reflecting on the condition of his body, thinking to himself "here you are Joe Bonham lying like a side of beef all the rest of your life" (113)—literally a piece of a whole carcass cut down to serve some purpose. He reflects on being drafted into the war, having his body shattered, and being unable to communicate or connect with others, and declares that it is absurd that he "[ended] up dead and rotting before my life [had] even begun good or [ended] up like a side of beef" (115) because of his involvement in battle. This comparison serves as a

response to the dehumanizing effects of his present bodily state, the warfare that imposed it on him, and the decay he confronted during battle.

In a world unfamiliar with corpses, burial, and decomposition, the increased death rates and direct interaction with decay resulting from modernized warfare culminated in a modern crisis. Joe recalls an incident in which he and his fellow soldiers found a dead Prussian officer whose body had already entered rigor mortis and had begun to swell, though he notes that the officer's "moustache was still waxed" (94), indicating that he desires to see him as he might have existed in life before his face began to swell and his body was overcome with decay. Instead, he finds him unembalmed and being eaten by a scavenging rat. The soldiers react to this scene with such repulsion that they chase the rat away and kill it because, as Joe reflects later, "It didn't matter whether the rat was gnawing on your buddy or a damned German it was all the same. Your real enemy was the rat and when you saw it there fat and well fed chewing on something that might be you why you went nuts" (95). Despite the heroism of a man's military service—in fact, *because* of it—he is unprotected from the decay that comes with dying. The soldiers' violent reaction and Joe's reflection later act as symptoms of the widespread uneasiness with decay in the modern world accentuated by the sense of impending and ubiquitous death the soldiers experienced in the trenches.

Rat infestations were not the only phobia about decay the soldiers endured in the trenches; the resemblance between lines of trenches and rows of graves in a cemetery (the freshly dug earth, the series of dividing fences, and the pre-planned row the trenches followed) did not go unnoticed by the soldiers, either. Soldiers found themselves literally interred in the earth while they fought. Allyson Booth's *Postcards from the Trenches* points out that "the most common soldier's nightmare was of being buried alive [in a bunker or trench]" (61). She argues

that a soldier's continual interment in these trenches blurred the boundaries between life and death, and their persistent fears of being buried alive indicated an understanding of the fact that such a fate meant "literally to occupy the position of life and death simultaneously—to become a conscious corpse" (61). Tim Blackmore writes in conjunction with Booth's claims that Joe "is that conscious corpse—awake, alive, and embedded in a flesh coffin"—a character who "speaks for the soldier buried alive" by modern warfare (4). Early in the novel, Joe exhibits the fear of being buried alive that Booth references when he wonders, "What about the rest of the guys?" in the trenches; "[t]here were some good boys down in that hole" (11). He wonders if they survived the shelling, or if the trench collapsed and buried them alive—a far more desirable fate, as far as Joe is concerned, than his. Soldiers buried alive in that sense would be completely dead rather than liminally dead, caught between the two worlds with no agency to tip the scales one way or the other.

His anxiety about such a death is compounded when he wakes up from dreams that reinforce the anxieties that the modern world—and modern warfare—has engendered in him. His rumination on the rat and the Prussian officer is followed by a dream in which a rat is feeding on his own body and he is unable to stop it. Here, the rat represents natural bodily decay unmediated by embalming and unmarked by commemoration, just as it did with the Prussian officer in the trench. It also represents war as it feeds on living flesh just as war does. The real enemies—warfare and decay as opposed to soldiers in the uniforms of opposing nations—have materialized for him, and because he has lost many of his senses that would have kept him grounded in reality, he is unable to distinguish where the dream ends and reality picks up. At an earlier point in the novel, he wakes from a similarly realistic-feeling dream feeling trapped by his blankets and sheets and remembering a nightmare from his youth in which—after reading *The Last Days*

of Pompeii—he dreamed that one of the Rocky Mountains turned out to be an active volcano that buried his neighborhood under hot lava. He woke up that night thinking “the covers were lava and that he was entombed while yet alive and that he would lie there dying forever” and then goes on to say that he “had that same gasping feeling now....He was unchristly scared so he gathered his strength and made like a man buried in loose earth clawing out with his hands toward air” (10). The juxtaposition of this childhood nightmare with Joe’s first foray into the world as he will now know it—a world he will encounter without limbs or the sense of sight, smell, taste, or hearing—draws a clear connection between a soldier’s figurative burial in the trenches, the fear of that figurative burial becoming a literal burial, and the entrapment many soldiers experienced after sustaining ghastly wounds in combat.

The anxieties about burial that Trumbo attributes to Joe (live burial in trenches, burial of specific body parts, burial imagery he uses to describe his hospital bed, and his feelings of burial within his own body) do not only arise in wartime; they are fears that harken back to the primal fear of decay that, in the modern world, motivated vast efforts at preservation. The image of a Pompeii-like volcanic eruption that pulled a young Joe Bonham from his nightmare is the first of many references to being buried alive that Trumbo uses to illustrate this crippling fear held by many who fought in the trenches. Joe continues to make these connections between his condition and the fear of being buried alive once he has been removed to a hospital. By the end of the novel, he understands himself to have been buried alive in many different senses. The trench served as a figurative grave for him and his fellow soldiers. When he was saved from being buried alive there, he conceived of his hospital bed as a burial space in which he was trapped in his bed unable to leave, unable to communicate with others, and unable to connect with the outside world. By the end of the novel, he understands himself to be buried in his own skin. He

cannot break free from his entrapment, and says “[i]t was as if all the people in the world the whole two billion of them had been against him pushing the lid of the coffin down on him tamping the dirt solid against the lid rearing great stones above the dirt to keep him in the earth” (Trumbo 222). The modern world, in other words, has come together to keep him buried and separate from the world of the living. Though he lies in a hospital bed (rather than in a grave separated from the city center as would be the custom during this period), his bed is separated from the other patients and the majority of the hospital staff. He has one nurse who checks on him regularly and one doctor who comes only when necessary. Because he belongs to the world of the dead, he belongs to a different realm than the people in the hospital who are able to walk and talk and live independent lives.

Joe’s hospital bed, the hospital, even his very body are all described with grave-like terminology, and he minces no words in calling himself a dead man and “an educational exhibit” about “all there was to know about war” (232) in that his body—torn apart by modern warfare—acted as a reminder of all of the damage that war can do to an individual and to humanity as a whole. Tim Blackmore argues that Joe is locked in a “bodily prison,” saying that “[t]he novel’s first section, ‘The Dead,’ shows Joe inching back to sanity; the second, ‘The Living,’ sees Joe learn to calculate time and consider the forces that brought him to his bodily prison” (1-2). The section entitled “The Dead” does not just show Joe “inching back to sanity,” though: it focuses primarily on Joe as a piece of rotting flesh, as a man who cannot make connections with the world around him, as a man who is forced into a kind of grave and marked as a dead man despite his being kept alive by modern medicine. Despite Trumbo’s decision to call the second section of the novel “The Living,” by the end Joe condenses himself down to a mere body, calling himself “meat and bone and hair” (Trumbo 233) and denying himself the status of a living being. He

positions himself as a corpse that will not break down. He sees himself as something that medicine created that is no longer quite alive but that “you can’t kill...because it is a human being” (236) kept alive by medical advances, not unlike the “little rows of unborn babies pickled in alcohol” (243) that he saw once in a doctor’s office. These fetuses are no longer alive, but they are preserved. It would be wrong to throw them out because they (like his arms and legs) are made of human matter despite the fact that they are no longer living, so they will continue to exist where they are, dependent upon the preservative technologies surrounding them. Liminality defines him just as it defines the fetuses. Neither can live independently, and both require the advancement of medicine and preservative technologies for them to exist and serve some purpose in the world of the living.

For much of the first section of the novel, Joe sees himself as mere meat to be experimented with and kept barely living. His body feeds the rest of the nation by virtue (or curse) of having gone to war and—essentially—dying for his country. His sacrifice feeds those who have survived, and any agency he ever had died with his status as something fully human. By the end of the first part of the novel, however, Joe begins to realize that he is not just meat. He has a mind, and he can still think, reflect, and learn. He can still create ideas, and he can adapt to his environment—something that a carcass cannot do. While a carcass would simply rot, Joe begins finding ways to adapt to his new reality. He learns how to count days and estimate how much time has passed. He becomes more sensitive to the slight warmth of the sun rising outside of his window. He realizes that he is not trapped in his hospital bed because he has the power of memory and imagination. He can visit anywhere in the world he went before his accident and can go there with anyone he has known. Because machines maintain his bodily functions, the only things he can control—perhaps the only thing he needs to control—is his

mind, and it is his mind that keeps him from being all body. By the second section of the novel, Joe is not a slab of beef; he is a mind with thoughts and memories and a message from the war dead to communicate to those around him—the idea that dying “for your country” simply means dying. In light of this realization, he sets about finding a kind of “voice” with which to communicate his ideas to others.

To clarify, the title of the novel’s second section, “The Living,” does not refer to Joe, but to those he obsessively tries to contact upon realizing that he has a message to send. By the end of the novel, Joe will categorize himself again as nothing more than “meat and bone and hair” (233), so Joe is not triumphant for having re-entered the world of the living. If the first section positions Joe as “The Dead,” the second part positions those around him as “The Living” and refers to the forces trying to keep him buried, primarily by refusing him the ability to communicate. Regardless, Joe finds himself motivated to communicate in some way, and so he requires some kind of transmission technology.

Upon finding this motivation, Joe makes several associations between the ability to communicate that he desperately needs and various methods of communicating over vast distances that he has encountered in his life. While Joe ties his amputations to food preservation, he ties his father’s death to the process of sound transmission. He associates his father’s death with the sound of the telephone ringing and the connection between that sound and his understanding of his father’s death. The ringing of the phone that he repeatedly hears in real time while lying in his hospital bed marks the moment when he first received news of his father’s death while working in a bakery away from home. Though Joe has lost his ability to hear, he has not yet realized that he is deaf and can “hear” the ringing of the telephone bell so clearly it is as if the telephone were in the room with him. What tips him off to the fact that the “telephone bell

[is] just part of a dream” is the fact that the bell he repeatedly hears “sound[s] different from any other telephone bell or any other sound because it [meant] death” (9). In this memory, “death” was the content of the message—the purpose for the communication. In Joe’s case, “death” will be the *source* of the message. Though he is moving away from viewing himself as a slab of beef, he still views himself as a member of the war dead. He is not part of the world of the living, after all. He is something different, something removed from the living but eager to forge a method of communication across the divide between the two.

Unfortunately, the telephone proves to be a poor analogy for Joe as he works through this problem, and the scene with the ringing telephone illustrates why, while also outlining one of the curses of sound technology—the persistence of reminders of the dead. Joe goes on to say “[t]hat bell and its message and everything about it was way back in time and he was finished with it” (9), but realistically he is not “finished with it” since his memory is still repeating it several years later. Because of these technologies, the memories associated with certain sounds, the voices of loved ones, favorite songs, and the like were less likely to dissipate over time because they could be recorded and played back again. While this can be an immense blessing, it can also be an anxiety-triggering curse. When Joe thinks to himself “...you’d think the telephone would stop ringing sometime. It couldn’t just go on forever” (8), he reveals discomfort with the consistent reminder of death and the loss he experienced in his younger life while illustrating a connection between sound transmission and death that at the time was fairly new—and infinitely important—to shifting commemorative practices.

In short, the ringing of the telephone brings up an association between communication and the division between the living and the dead. The analogy is problematic, but it represents a promising example of the kind of transmission that Joe needs. In keeping with Joe’s association

of his father's death and the ringing of the telephone, he relates his own status as a dead-while-living body to the ability to communicate with the living. As a result, the connection between sound transmission and death moves from a technology that allows news of death to travel further distances more quickly and facilitate quicker commemoration, to a technology that opens communicative lines between the living and the dead. At the very end of the first section of the novel, Joe has inklings that he should be able to communicate a message from the war dead to the members of the living world around him. While reflecting on the use of war rhetoric like, "[t]his ground sanctified by blood," "[t]hey shall not have died in vain," and "[o]ur noble dead" (119), Joe stops and asks,

But what do the dead say? [D]id anyone of them ever come back and say by god I'm glad I'm dead because death is always better than dishonor?...Did any of them ever say here I am I've been rotting for two years in a foreign grave but it's wonderful to die for your native land?...Nobody but the dead know whether all these things people talk about are worth dying for or not. And the dead can't talk. (119-120)

After several pages of this kind of frantic, angry reflection on the boundaries between the living and the dead, Joe realizes, "He was the nearest thing to a dead man on earth. He was a dead man with a mind that could still think. He knew all the answers that the dead knew and couldn't think about. He could speak for the dead because he was one of them" (122). The message he wants to communicate is that nothing is worth dying for "[b]ecause when you're dead...it's all over. You're dead mister and you died for nothing. You're dead mister. Dead." Joe cannot act as a telephone because he cannot speak. He cannot actually deliver *sounds* from the dead to the living. With that repeated insistence that the war dead are just dead and that the divide is too much to bridge, the first section of the novel closes on an overwhelmingly defeated note.

Joe does not have voice at his disposal, but he does have touch and vibration, and in light of that fact, the end of the novel positions Joe as a different technology of sound transmission that is capable of working with his bodily abilities. He becomes a telegraph, a living medium for transmitting a message from the war dead to the world of the living. Jeffrey Sconce argues in *Haunted Media* that the history of sound transmission has been haunted by the world of the dead since the inception of the telegraph. A movement from the late nineteenth century called "Modern Spiritualism" was heralded by those who "believed that the dead were in contact with the living" and that "the material world could receive transmissions from the dead through what they called the 'spiritual telegraph'" (Sconce 12). For these believers, argues Sconce, the "spiritual telegraph" was not simply a matter of metaphor or elaborate belief system. Spiritualists believed that this was "an actual technology of the afterlife, one invented by scientific geniuses in the world of the dead for the explicit purpose of instructing the land of the living in the principles of utopian reform" (12). Joe Bonham exemplifies this turn-of-the-century belief as he attempts to tell the living that dying in war is not honorable or sanctified, but simply a willingness to give up one's own life. If we can read Modern Spiritualism from the viewpoint of the dead, it might be understood as the dead's reaction to being shut out of the world of the living by modernizing burial practices, like the removal of burial grounds from the city center and the rise of the burial industry.

In *Johnny Got His Gun*, the war dead have a message that Joe desperately wants to communicate. Joe is the medium that will transmit the message—a comparison that is not so outlandish considering that Joe is being kept alive by machines, and much criticism of the novel argues that he is fairly posthuman and machine like. He represents important developments that gave rise to notable anxieties in the modern world, and allows for the reconnection of the living

and the dead, bridging the gap that so many developments of decay management had created. He tries for a considerable amount of time to communicate via Morse code with his nurse—the telegraph operator who receives his coded message—by tapping his head on his pillow. Sconce points out that during the age of Modern Spiritualism, the mediums who could receive the transmissions from the dead were often women. He writes that "the Spiritualist movement provided one of the first and most important forums for women's voices to enter the public sphere. The majority of 'mediums' were women, and mediumship itself was thought to be a function of the unique 'electrical' constitutions of women" (12). This provides a possible explanation for the nurse's ability to communicate with Joe by writing "Merry Christmas" on his chest and recognizing that his attempts to tap messages in Morse code with his head were communicative attempts instead of signs of insanity or bodily shock. When Joe's attempts are finally successful, he says it was as if "a lid had been lifted from a coffin a stone had been rolled away from a tomb and a dead man was tapping and talking" (224). He has not come back to life, but he has made contact with the living. Through successful communication, Joe breaks down the barrier between the living and the dead by utilizing the developments of nineteenth century message transmission.

Joe intends his efforts to connect the living and the dead—in much the same way that 19th century communicative technologies were seen as ways to potentially contact those who had passed away. Jonathan Sterne writes in *The Audible Past* about a *Washington Post* writer who "speculated during an interview with gramophone and microphone inventor Emile Berliner that radio would eventually allow for communication with the dead since it picks up vibrations in the ether and the dead 'simply vibrate at a slower rate' than the living" (289). Again, the developments of the nineteenth century have set up the very modern and very anxious reactions

to encountering decay in various forms. Friedrich A. Kittler writes that by the late nineteenth century speech had “become, as it were, immortal” (21) with Edison’s invention of the phonograph, “a by-product of the attempt to optimize telephony and telegraphy” (Kittler 27). The analogy of Modern Spiritualism and the spiritual telegraph provides a way of reading Joe as a conduit between the living and the dead that works within the confines of the existing criticism that focuses on his posthuman state. If Joe is the device that transmits the message, the nurse is the medium who receives and decodes his message. Upon realizing that Joe was trying to tap out a message, the nurse brings the doctor to Joe's bedside where he supposedly receives his message in its entirety. He knows now that Joe can communicate and that he wishes to speak to the horrors of war and its effects on the soldiers—specifically the *fallen* soldiers. First, Joe asks to be allowed to leave the hospital, to be made into a traveling educational exhibit, and to be allowed to communicate to viewers the fact that he is the result of what modernized warfare does to the body. When the doctor responds by saying, "What you ask is against regulations" (242), Joe rethinks his request, tapping "pleadingly haltingly humbly that please he wanted out....The thing about showing him in a case forget that it was just a way to raise money and make it easier on them" (245). The doctor drugs Joe to calm him down, and Joe necessarily stops tapping. The telegraph has been disconnected.

As Joe falls into a hallucinatory daze, he closes the novel with several pages of rumination on what message he will give the world when he is allowed to transmit it successfully. He asserts that "[h]e would not let them lower the lid to his coffin. He would scream and claw and fight as any man should do when they are burying him alive" (247). He resolves to continue spreading his message of what war actually does to the body and the fact that dying for your country is just dying because "he had seen the future he had tasted it and now

he was living it....He saw a world of lovers forever parted of dreams never consummated of plans that never turned into reality. He saw a world of dead fathers and crippled brothers and crazy screaming sons" (248) and various other atrocities caused by war. In the final pages of the novel, Joe realizes that the doctor—whom he associates with the forces in the world that contribute to modernized ways of killing and dying for the sake of progress—knows that Joe could upset the balance of the false slogans of war and the citizens willing to believe them. Further, his occupation of this liminal space between life and dead could upset the modern segregation of the dead from the living. The doctor, therefore, cannot allow Joe's message to be heard by others outside of Joe's hospital room and censors Joe's transmission of the message from the war dead. Upon realizing that the doctor wants to silence him, Joe asserts that "he had told them his secret and in denying him they had told him theirs":

[S]omewhere in the future they saw war. To fight that war they would need men and if men saw the future they wouldn't fight. So they were masking the future they were keeping the future a soft quiet deadly secret. They knew that if all the little people all the little guys saw the future they would begin to ask questions. They would ask questions and they would find answers and they would say to the guys who wanted them to fight they would say you lying thieving sons-of-bitches we won't fight we won't be dead we will live we are the world we are the future and we will not let you butcher us no matter what you say no matter what speeches you make no matter what slogans you write. (249)

While Trumbo—motivated by the atrocities of World War I and the specter of World War II on the horizon—represents Joe as a living corpse, he also represents him as a spiritual telegraph of sorts that communicates to the living the horrors of war that only the war dead can understand clearly.

Though these various preservative technologies developed and improved significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the “solutions” to decay anxiety were not dependable. Transmitted sound still dissipates, messages sent via these transmissions can be ignored or misinterpreted, embalmed bodies are still buried and no longer contain the living being who has been lost, and preserved food does not stay preserved forever. Preservation, the “solution” to decay anxiety, only prolongs the moment at which the world has to face decay, and in doing so makes the world less experienced with these natural processes and therefore much less comfortable when made to encounter them—particularly during times of war when death tolls skyrocket and society can no longer look away from death.

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Ryan, Maureen. “No Woman’s Land: Gender in Willa Cather’s *One of Ours*.” *Studies in American Fiction* 18.1 (1990): 65-75. Print.

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- White, Christopher T. "The Modern Magnetic Animal: *As I Lay Dying* and the Uncanny Zoology of Modernism." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.3 (2008): 81-101. Print.

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Wittman, Laura. *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body*. Buffalo, NY: U of Toronto P, 2011. Print.

Yongue, Patricia Lee. "For Better and for Worse: At Home and at War in *One of Ours*." In *Willa Cather: Family, Community, and History*. Eds. John Joseph Murphy, Linda Hunter Adams, and Paul Rawlins. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, Humanities Publication Center, 1990. 141-153. Print.

VITA

Victoria M. Bryan, PhD
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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, English (December 2014)

The University of Mississippi (Oxford, MS)

Dissertation: Modern(izing) Burial in Interwar American Literature

This dissertation aims to study literary representation of interwar American deathways as reflections of modernity. The study of burial in United States history tends to focus on mid- to late-nineteenth century movements that distance the dead from the living. This dissertation argues that these practices left Americans ill-equipped to process the influx of death from the conflict areas of World War I, keen to allow the further development of the funeral industry during the interwar period, and anxious about the certain rise in death tolls that would result from World War II. Interwar literature, therefore, is characterized by a difficulty in meaning-making that extends to the increased death toll from the modernization of deathways between the world wars. Novels examined include John Dos Passos's *1919* and *One Man's Initiation: 1917*; William Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*; Willa Cather's *One of Ours*; Richard Wright's *Native Son*; Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*, and Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*.

Committee: Jay Watson (Director), Leigh Anne Duck (Second Reader), Jaime Harker (Third Reader), and Charles Reagan Wilson (Outside Reader, History/Southern Studies).

Prospectus Approved: April 2013.

Master of Arts, English: Literature (December 2009)

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Chattanooga, TN)

Master's Thesis: "Disrupted Constructions: Joe Christmas's Formation of Race and Sexuality in *Light in August*" This thesis examined William Faulkner's *Light in August* through two primary lenses. First, I looked at Joe Christmas's construction of sexuality through a Freudian lens in terms of his fixation on the intake of food. Further, I examined the way he constructs his understanding of his ambiguous racial background in terms of the sexuality he has developed. I utilized Joane Nagel's theory that sexuality determines the maintenance or blurring of racial lines.

Bachelor of Arts, English and American Language and Literature (May 2007)

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Chattanooga, TN)

Major – English Literature

Minor – Psychology

Study Abroad

National University of Ireland, Galway (June – July 2007)

University College of Dublin (July 2008)

TESOL Certification (June 2013)

PUBLICATIONS

Articles:

“Re-Appropriating Native American Deathways in *The Female American*.” *International Journal of American Studies*. Forthcoming.

“‘That’s what TV is supposed to do’: *Mad Men* and Post-9/11 Containment Culture.” *New Narratives of Disaster and Crisis: Reflecting on 9/11 in the Obama Era*. Forthcoming.

“‘What About a Tea-Kettle?’: Anxiety, Mourning, and Burial in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*.” *Studies in American Jewish Literature*. Forthcoming.

Review of *Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity* by Jonathan Goldman and John Dos Passos: *Biography and Critical Essays*, ed. Maria Zina Gonçalves de Abreu and Bernardo Guido de Vasconcelos. *The Space Between* 9.1 (2013).

Interview with John Dos Passos Coggin. *The Speech of the People*. February 2012.

Review of *Ernest Hemingway and the Geography of Memory*, ed. Mark Cirino and Mark P. Ott. *The Hemingway Review* 31.1 (2011).

“‘You’ll Never Find a Woman who is Worthy of You’: Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the Effects of Oedipal Impulses in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.” *Faulkner and Chopin*. Cape Girardeau: Southeast Missouri State University Press, 2010.

Edited Collections:

New Narratives of Disaster and Crisis: Reflecting on 9/11 in the Obama Era. Ed. Victoria M. Bryan, Arin Keeble, and Heather Pope. Collection of essays that began at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference Special Sessions on 9/11 and Literature from 2012-2014. Currently under contract with Cambridge Scholars Publishers.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Tenure-Track Instructor – Cleveland State Community College (August 2014 – present)

Composition I – First year writing with a focus on argument, process, and development using various rhetorical modes. 4 sections taught.

Composition II - A continuation of Composition I in which students are expected to further develop writing skills in response to diverse pieces of literature. 1 section taught.

Graduate Teaching Assistant – University of Mississippi (August 2010 – present)

World Literature I – Literary, cultural, and historical contributions of classical, medieval, and Renaissance periods to the value systems and worldviews of contemporary society. Particular focus given to the development of aesthetic awareness and the appreciation of literary art. Teaching Assistant for 3 sections.

Guest Lecture presented on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* – November 2010

American Literature II – A study of 150 years of American literature from the Civil War to the present. Students study the novel, the short story, poems, plays, manifestoes, essays, and other forms of personal testimony from movements including realism, naturalism, the plantation tradition, local color, modernism, the Beats, postmodernism, “dirty realism,” and various concurrent developments within African American literature.

Guest Lecture presented on the poetry of Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens – March 2011

First Year Writing I – Provide and build on the foundations in composition, grammar, and reading in preparation for future academic writing and learning situations. 2 sections taught.

First Year Writing II (Literature theme) – A writing about literature course designed to build on writing skills learned in First Year Writing I and develop critical thinking and research skills appropriate for use in academic writing. 1 section taught.

First Year Writing II (Business theme) – A theme-based, first-year writing course focused on business-related issues designed to build on writing skills learned in First Year Writing I and develop critical thinking and research skills appropriate for use in academic writing. TA for 1 section.

Advanced Composition online – Students advance in research skills, methods, and projects; deepen their awareness of audience-specific and rhetorical conventions and mechanics; focus on critical thinking skills in all parts of the composing process; use effective rhetorical strategies to effectively analyze lengthier, complex readings and synthesize external sources and ideas into logically sound arguments, and develop a style suitable for specific academic purposes and audiences. TA for 1 section.

Instructor of record for 3 sections.

Writing Center Consultant – Trained peer writing tutor. One semester.

Adjunct Professor – Chattanooga State Community College, Chattanooga, TN (August 2009-present)

Developmental Writing II – Continued study and application to achieve writing skills needed for college. 3 sections taught.

Composition I – First year writing with a focus on exposition, argument, process, and development using various rhetorical patterns. 2 sections taught.

Composition I online – First year writing via online instruction with a focus on exposition, argument, process, and development using various rhetorical patterns. 8 sections taught.

Dual Enrollment/Early College Composition I and II – First year writing for high school seniors with a focus on exposition, argument, process, and development using various rhetorical patterns (in composition I) and a continuation of those skills in response to diverse pieces of literature (composition II). 6 sections taught.

Humanities I – A historical approach to pivotal ideas, systems of thought, and creations of the Western world (e.g., music, drama, painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature) as reflections of the culture that produced them. Antiquity through A.D. 1600. 2 sections taught on ground; 18 sections taught online.

Humanities II online – Historical approach to pivotal ideas, systems of thought, and creation of the Western World (e.g., music, drama, painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature) as reflections of the culture that produced them, from A.D. 1600 to the present. 4 sections taught.

Western Literature I – Literary, cultural, and historical contributions of classical, medieval, and Renaissance periods to the value systems and worldviews of contemporary society. Particular focus given to the development of aesthetic awareness and the appreciation of literary art. 1 section taught on ground; 2 sections taught online.

Western Literature II – Selected readings from the 17th through 20th centuries; focus on cultural and aesthetic values presented by the writers, their relationship to earlier literature, and their influence on contemporary literature. 1 section taught.

American Literature to 1855 – Selected readings from American literature from its beginnings (including Native American pieces as well as colonial writings) to the period just before the Civil War. This course surveys the literary value of American literature produced before Reconstruction while also examining its impact on more contemporary pieces of American writing. 1 section taught.

American Literature since 1855 - Selected readings from American literature from 1855 to the present. This course surveys the literary value of American literature during the Romantic, Realist, Naturalist, Modernist, and Postmodernist periods and reaching into these works' impacts on culture in the present day. 1 section taught.

Adjunct Professor – Nashville State Community College/Charles Bass Correctional Complex, Nashville, TN (August 2013 – present)

Composition I – First year writing taught at Charles Bass Correctional Complex. Students are incarcerated during their time in the Charles Bass college program, and they have to pass the compass exam in order to participate. The class focuses on exposition, argument, process, and development using various rhetorical patterns. Students are expected to read a variety of short stories and essays, and analyze verbal and written arguments (in the form of TEDTalks, YouTube videos, and political speeches). Along with these reading assignments, students are also expected to write five essays and give one verbal presentation. 1 sections taught.

Adjunct Professor – University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, TN (August 2008 – May, 2010)

Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition I – Students build on the foundations in composition, grammar, and reading in preparation for future academic writing and learning situations. 2 sections taught.

Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition II – Students continue to practice those principles of effective writing studied in Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition I. In addition, students practice writing extended argument essays and writing from outside sources. 6 sections taught.

Western Humanities I – A general survey of western literature, art, and philosophy from the eighth century BCE to the late 1500s CE. 2 sections taught.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Invited Presentation:

“Southern Incarceration: Teaching the Southern Short Story at Charles Bass Correctional Complex.” Paper presented as part of the University of Mississippi’s Works in Progress Lecture Series. Oxford, MS, October 18, 2013.

Presentations:

“‘Truth? What Is Truth?’: John Dos Passos and Prison Writing.” Paper presented at the First Biennial John Dos Passos Society Conference. Chattanooga, TN, October 10-11, 2014.

“Teaching John Dos Passos’s Radical Work in the Prison Classroom.” Paper presented at the First Biennial John Dos Passos Society Conference. Chattanooga, TN, October 10-11, 2014.

“The American Short Story Beyond Bars.” Paper presented at the 2014 American Literature Association Convention as part of a panel entitled “Rethinking the American Literary Canon in Response to Mass Incarceration.” Washington, DC, May 22-25, 2014.

“Incarcerated Learners and John Dos Passos’s ‘They Are Dead Now’: Moving from Message to Form in the Classroom.” Paper presented at the 2014 American Literature

- Association Convention as part of a teaching roundtable sponsored by the John Dos Passos Society. This presentation is a follow up to the presentation given in 2013. Washington, DC, May 22-25, 2014.
- “The Spectacle of Cremation in *Absalom, Absalom!*” Paper presented at the Southern Writers/Southern Writing Graduate Conference. Oxford, MS, July 18-20, 2013.
- “John Dos Passos’s ‘They Are Dead Now’ in the Dual Enrollment Classroom and In Prison Outreach Course Development.” Paper presented at the 2013 American Literature Association Convention as part of a teaching roundtable sponsored by the John Dos Passos Society. Boston, MA, May 23-26, 2013.
- “‘Get me in the ground where the dead belong’: Modern Intersections of Religious and Secular Burials in *The Violent Bear it Away* and *The Optimist’s Daughter*.” Paper presented at the 2013 American Literature Association Convention as part of a panel sponsored by the Society for the Study of Southern Literature. Boston, MA, May 23-26, 2013.
- “Reappropriating Native American Deathways in *The Female American*.” Paper presented at the 2013 Southern American Studies Association Conference. Charleston, SC, January 31-February 2, 2013.
- “‘Death in its reality passed her right over’: Funereal Modernity in Flannery O’Connor’s *The Violent Bear it Away* and Eudora Welty’s *The Optimist’s Daughter*.” Paper presented at the 2012 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Durham, NC, November 9-11, 2012.
- “Empowering Readers with the Preamble to Dos Passos’s *The 42nd Parallel* in First-Year Writing.” Paper presented at the 2012 American Literature Association Convention entitled “Teaching John Dos Passos: A Round Table Discussion.” San Francisco, CA, May 24-27, 2012.
- “Pulp Faulkner: Publication Strategies for *Intruder in the Dust*.” Paper presented at the 2011 Faulkner and the Media Ecology conference. New South Wales, Australia, November 23-26, 2011.
- “‘A Meaningful Existence’: Heroism in Dos Passos’s Camera Eye Fragments of *The 42nd Parallel*.” Paper presented as part of a John Dos Passos Society affiliated panel at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference. Atlanta, GA, November 4-6, 2011.
- “Food and Masculine Community in Eudora Welty’s ‘The Wide Net’ and ‘Flowers for Marjorie.’” Paper presented at The University of Mississippi’s Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference. Oxford, MS, July 14-16, 2011.
- “Humor as Truth in *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* and *Everything is Illuminated*.” Paper presented as part of the American Humor Studies Association panel at the 2011 American Literature Association Convention. Boston, MA, May 26-28, 2011.
- “Creating a Desegregationist: The Publication History of *Intruder in the Dust*.” Paper presented as part of the pulp studies panel session at the 2011 Popular Culture

- Association/American Culture Association Convention. San Antonio, TX, April 20-23, 2011.
- “Darwinian Approaches to Daisy Buchanan and Lady Brett.” Paper presented as part of the Darwinian Literary Theory panel session at the 2010 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 5-7, 2010
- “Joe Christmas’s formation of Race and Sexuality in *Light in August*.” Paper presented at Southeast Missouri State University’s Faulkner and Morrison conference. Cape Girardeau, MO, October 28-30, 2010.
- “Death, Sex, and Denial in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*.” Paper presented at The University of Mississippi’s Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference. Oxford, MS, July 15-17, 2010.
- “‘The Only *Truthful* Way to Tell a Sad Story’: The Humor Behind the ‘Life Writing’ of Foer and Eggers.” Paper presented at the Northeast Modern Language Association Convention. Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 7-11, 2010.
- “Joe Christmas’s Construction of Sexuality in *Light in August*.” Paper presented at The University of Mississippi’s Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference. Oxford, MS, July 16-18, 2009.
- “‘Eat or Be Eaten’: Consumption and Death Denial in The Lestrygonians.” Paper presented at Eire on the Erie: North American James Joyce Conference. Buffalo, NY, June 12-17, 2009.
- “Ernest Becker and Death Denial in The Lestrygonians Episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses*” Paper presented at the Southern American Conference on Irish Studies. Chattanooga, TN, March 20-22, 2009.
- “‘That Way the Fighting Lies, and I Long to Follow’: Alcott’s Autobiographical Bent in *Hospital Sketches* and *Little Women*.” Paper presented as part of a panel session entitled “Women Writers and the Civil War” at The Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War and Free Expression. Chattanooga, TN, November 13-15, 2008.
- What is a ‘Writer’s Writer?’: John Banville’s Benjamin Black Novels.” Paper presented as part of the Irish Literature panel session at the 2008 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Louisville, KY, November 7-9, 2008.
- “William Faulkner’s Construction of Family in *Light in August* and *The Sound and the Fury*.” Paper presented as part of the American Literature post 1900 panel session at the 2008 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Louisville, KY, November 7-9, 2008.
- “‘Avoiding the ‘Grotesque Easter-Egg Hunt’: Sigmund Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* and William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.” Paper presented at Southeast Missouri State University’s Faulkner and Chopin Conference. Cape Girardeau, MO, October 2-4, 2008.
- “‘You’ll Never Find a Woman who is Worthy of You’: Oedipal Impulse in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.” Paper presented at The University of

Mississippi's Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference. Oxford, MS, July 17-19, 2008.

Panel Chair Positions:

Panel on Manhattan Transfer at the First Biennial John Dos Passos Society Conference. Chattanooga, TN, October 10-11, 2014.

John Dos Passos Society panel entitled "Representations of Gender and Sexuality in John Dos Passos's Writing" at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 7-9, 2013.

Literature After 9/11 panel entitled "Reflections, Reactions" at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Durham, NC, November 8-10, 2012.

John Dos Passos Society panel entitled "Representations of Europe & America in John Dos Passos's Work" at the 2012 American Literature Association Convention. San Francisco, CA, May 24-27, 2012.

Eudora Welty panel at the 2011 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 4-6, 2011.

American Literature post-1900 panel entitled "Food in American Literature" at the 2011 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 4-6, 2011.

John Dos Passos panel entitled "Reconsidering John Dos Passos" at the 2011 American Literature Association Convention. Boston, MA, May 26-28, 2011.

William Faulkner panel entitled "Psychological Approaches" at Southeast Missouri State's Faulkner and Morrison Conference. Cape Girardeau, MO, October 28-30, 2010.

William Faulkner panel entitled "Faulkner's Narrators" at the 2010 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 5-7, 2010.

American Literature post-1900 panel entitled "Illustrated Texts in American Literature" at the 2010 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 5-7, 2010.

Irish Literature panel session entitled "Death in Modern to Contemporary Irish Literature" at the 2009 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 6-8, 2009.

William Faulkner panel entitled "The Scrutiny of the Public Eye in the Works of William Faulkner" at the 2009 South Atlantic Modern Language Association Convention. Atlanta, GA, November 6-8, 2009.

William Faulkner panel at The First Annual Graduate and Undergraduate Student Conference on Literature, Rhetoric, and Composition. Chattanooga, TN, March 27-28, 2009.

SERVICE TO THE INSTITUTION:

University of Mississippi:

Writing 102 Curriculum Committee (August 2012-present)

CompTalk Lecture Series Participant – Teaching Grammar in First-Year Writing (October 2012)

Program Committee Member – Faulkner Remembrance Day held in conjunction with the 2012 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference (January 2012-July 2012)

The Reivers Marathon Reading Committee – Faulkner Remembrance Day held in conjunction with the 2012 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference (February 2012-July 2012)

Conference Chair for the Southern Writers, Southern Writing graduate conference at The University of Mississippi (August 2011-July 2012)

Student Representative – Graduate Studies Committee (August 2011-May 2012)

Chair of the English Graduate Student Colloquium Committee (May 2011-April 2012)

President of the English Graduate Student Body (May 2011-May 2012)

Special Assistant to the Chair for the Southern Writers, Southern Writing graduate conference (April 2011-July 2011)

Chattanooga State Community College:

Workshop Leader for Young Writers Conference (January 2014)

New Student Orientation Workshop Leader (August 2013)

Take 10 Initiative Participant (July 2013-August 2013)

Workshop Leader for Young Writers Conference (January 2012)

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga:

President of the Graduate Student Association (August 2009-December 2009)

Chair of the Conference Organization Committee for Sigma Tau Delta, Xi Alpha chapter (September 2008-December 2009)

English Department Liaison to the Graduate Student Association Advisory Board (August 2008-May 2009)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION:

Corrections and Education Outreach

Designed and submitted for state and local review a comprehensive, literature-based education initiative in collaboration with the Southern Literature Alliance. Class expected to commence in the fall of 2014. Proposal, funding requests, and sample syllabus available upon request.

The John Dos Passos Society

President (October 2014-present)

Secretary-Treasurer (May 2012-October 2014)

Interim Treasurer (June 2011-May 2012)

Co-Founder (June 2011)

Tennessee Council for Teachers of English

Vice-President – East Tennessee/Chattanooga Chapter (September 2012-September 2013)

Chair – Program Planning Committee for TCTE's 2010 convention (November 2009-September 2010)

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

University of Mississippi:

Frances Bell McCool Dissertation Fellowship. Non-teaching fellowship awarded to one student biennially to ensure completion of a dissertation focused on the writing of William Faulkner. Relinquished upon receiving a tenure-track position at Cleveland State Community College. (August 2014)

Paragon Award for Outstanding Online Course Design. Award open to faculty, staff, and graduate teaching instructors. (April 2014)

Southern American Studies Association Conference Travel Grant. (February 2013)

Student Development Grant. Awarded by the Division of Student Life at the University of Mississippi. (July 2011)

GRE Fellowship. Awarded by graduate school for high GRE scores. August, 2010-May, 2014

University of Tennessee, Chattanooga:

Graduate Travel Funding Award: Awarded by the Graduate Student Association at UT at Chattanooga on the basis of need, merit, and prestige of conference/research destination.

Harper Travel Fund Award: Awarded annually by the South Atlantic Modern Language Association to a graduate student involved in the annual conference. Awarded on the basis of scholarly merit. November, 2008.

Sally B Young Award: Awarded yearly to an English student showing outstanding work in the field. May, 2008.